Cultural bridge

Traditional instrument helps foster links between people LIFE, PAGE 18

Ningbo taps 'blue carbon' credit market

CHINA, PAGE 5

In smooth water

China's cruise sector buoyed by optimized COVID policies

BUSINESS, PAGE 14

CHINA DAILY

FRIDAY, March 17, 2023

中国日报

chinadaily.com.cn RMB ¥2

Reform plan to boost efficiency, mitigate risks

Major overhaul to help optimize, adjust institutional responsibilities in key areas

By CAO DESHENG
caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

China has released a plan on reforming Party and State institutions, a move that will help improve national governance efficiency and tackle risks and challenges in order to promote high-quality development.

A central financial commission will be set up to strengthen the Party's centralized and unified leadership in financial supervision and management, according to a circular jointly issued by the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, and made public on Thursday.

The commission, which will help coordinate the functioning of the CPC Central Committee, will shoulder responsibilities for formulating plans, coordinating related sectors and following up the implementation of financial policies to ensure the nation's financial stability and sound development, according to the circular. It will also be responsible for studying and reviewing major issues and policies in the financial sector.

Inside

See more, **page 3**

A central financial work committee will be set up to strengthen the unified leadership over the Party's work in the financial sector, which will involve Party building, strengthening ideological, organizational and disciplinary work, and improving conduct of financial workers, the circular said.

In addition, a national financial regulatory administration will be set up under the State Council to strengthen the country's financial regulation system and prevent major financial and ethical risks. The new administration will unify the regulatory responsibilities of all financial sectors, except for securities, and oversee the supervision of financial holding companies by the People's Bank of China, the nation's central bank, and improve the management of State-owned financial capital.

Reorganization of the financial system is an important part of the Party and State institutional reform, Hao Dong, deputy director of the Department of Strategic Philosophy, at the Party School of the CPC Central Committee, told Xinhua News Agency.

With the first session of the 14th National People's Congress passing the State Council's institutional reform plan, the focus is now on optimizing and adjusting the institutional responsibilities in key areas, such as science and technology, and strengthening financial regulation and highlighting the crucial links of economic and social development, Hao said.

The CPC Central Committee will also establish a central science and technology commission. According to the circular, it will strive to push for national technological innovation; examine and approve major strategies, plans and policies for the sector's development; and coordinate efforts to resolve major issues of strategic, guiding and fundamental significance.

As part of a plan to strengthen innovation in the field of technology, China will reorganize the Ministry of Science and Technology under the State Council, with the mission to focus on strategic planning and macro-management, while promoting the economic application of scientific research and innovation and integrating technology with economic and social development.

The aim is to establish a new national system for technology development and further promote self-reliance in technology to strengthen strategic emerging industries and upgrade the economy, Hao said.

The circular said the CPC Central Committee will set up an office for Hong Kong and Macao affairs, based on the existing Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, in order to implement the principle of "one country, two systems" and uphold national security.

The CPC Central Committee will also establish a social work department to coordinate efforts in advancing grassroots-level governance over Party-related work in national industrial associations and business organizations, the circular said. Party committees at the provincial, municipal and county levels will set up their social work departments accordingly.

The circular made clear reforms in other State institutions, including the NPC, China's top legislature, and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the top political advisory body.

It said related reforms at the national level should be completed before the end of this year, while those related to the sub-national level should be completed before the end of 2024.

Accelerating economy

People inspect vehicles on Wednesday at the Xinjiang 315 International Auto Show opening in Urumqi, capital of Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. This year's event, which features more than 1,000 vehicles, has attracted major car manufacturers and more than 200 auto dealers. LIU XIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Legislation framework keeping cyberspace safe

By CAO YIN
caoyin@chinadaily.com.cn

China has consolidated its legal system for cyberspace governance over the years, providing a strong institutional guarantee for building the country's strength in cyberspace, officials said while introducing a white paper.

Inside

Full text, **pages 9-11**

Titled "China's Law-Based Cyberspace Governance in the New Era", the paper was issued by the State Council Information Office on Thursday.

"Since 1994, when China was fully connected to the internet, it has accelerated legislation in cyberspace and promulgated more than 140 relevant laws," Cao Shumin, vice-minister of the Cyberspace Administration of China, said while explaining the paper at a news conference held by the office.

Now, the country has formed a cyber legislation framework, with the Constitution as the foundation and supported by laws, administrative regulations, departmental rules, local regulations and local administrative rules, she said.

The framework is endorsed by traditional legislation and underpinned by specialized cyber laws governing online content and management, cybersecurity, information technology and other elements, the paper said.

Recalling the legislation in the new era, Yue Zhongming, an official at the Legislative Affairs Commission of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the country's top legislature, revealed that they had formulated five laws on cyberspace and digital governance since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012.

The five pieces of legislation are the Cybersecurity Law, E-commerce Law, Data Security Law, Personal Information Protection Law and the Combating Telecom and Online Fraud Law.

During the period, a few existing laws were also revised to clarify responsibilities of online platforms, protect consumers' rights and maintain fair competition in cyberspace, Yue said.

"In addition, we compiled the Civil Code and amended the Criminal Law to better safeguard civil rights of those engaged in new forms of business and to fight new types of online crimes," he added.

Cyber legislation is now gradually concentrating on comprehensive cyberspace governance by covering areas such as network information services, information technology development and cybersecurity, according to the paper.

In the new era, a series of campaigns to regulate cyberactivities, such as those against online pornography, rumors, fraud and bullying, were carried out nationwide.

Such campaigns mean that law enforcement in cyberspace has intensified, Cao said, adding that these have also played "a big role in responding to public concerns and helping create a safe, fair, healthy, civilized and clean online environment".

With stronger domestic capacity in law-based internet governance, the paper noted that China has contributed ideas and solutions to global internet governance.

It said that China will always be committed to all-around law-based governance of the country and of the cyberspace, following the global governance principle of achieving shared growth through consultation and collaboration in the face of opportunities and challenges brought about by digitalization.

China-proposed initiative on global civilization hailed

By CAO DESHENG

Leaders of political parties and organizations from around the world have hailed the China-proposed Global Civilization Initiative, saying that it has great relevance, together with the Global Development Initiative and Global Security Initiative, to building up countries' consensus on addressing mounting global challenges in terms of peace, security, development and harmonious coexistence.

Their comments came as Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, unveiled the Global Civilization Initiative on Wednesday at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting. The meeting's theme was "Path Towards Modernization: the Responsibility of Political Parties".

Inside

Full text, **page 7**

The initiative calls for respect for the diversity of civilizations, upholding the common values of humanity in pursuing peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom, and promoting robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation.

See ***Initiative***, *page 3*

A screen displays the Credit Suisse share price at the New York Stock Exchange in New York on Wednesday. SETH WENIG / AP

Domestic banks ready to counter global turmoil

By SHI JING in Shanghai
and HENG WEILI in New York

With troubled Swiss bank Credit Suisse casting a shadow over the global banking system, China's system is better placed to avoid any turmoil given its relative independence and a stable interest rate environment, experts said on Thursday.

Credit Suisse's one-year credit default swaps — the derivative showing the cost of insuring its bonds against default — surged to 1,000 basis points on Wednesday, similar to levels seen during the 2008 financial crisis and an indication that the bank is in deep financial distress.

See ***Banks***, *page 3*

Inside

Comment, **page 8**

NATION SHEDS MORE LIGHT ON ITS RICH PAST

Grand chapter of history on display at renovated Beijing complex

By WANG RU and WANG KAIHAO

indepth

At the end of 2021, a group of elderly residents living near the centuries-old Nanchizi Street close to the Forbidden City in Beijing was invited to visit a stone-built complex near their homes.

The complex had long been shrouded in mystery, with numerous passersby stopping to peek through a crack in its front gate to glimpse the architectural splendors within.

For nearly 500 years, the Huangshicheng complex stood quietly to the east of the Forbidden City — China's imperial palace from 1420 to 1911, which is now also known as the Palace Museum. Huangshicheng translates as "the archives that hold royal history".

Wu Huanliang, a scholar at the First Historical Archives of China, which manages the complex, said, "When these seniors arrived in the courtyard at the complex, they were excited. They said they had lived alongside the complex for a long time, but had never been able to visit it. This is a good way to reconnect history with present-day life."

See ***Complex***, *page 2*

国内统一编号: CN11-0091 国际标准编号: ISSN0253-9543 邮发代号:1-3

© 2023 China Daily
All Rights Reserved

Vol.43 — No. 13365

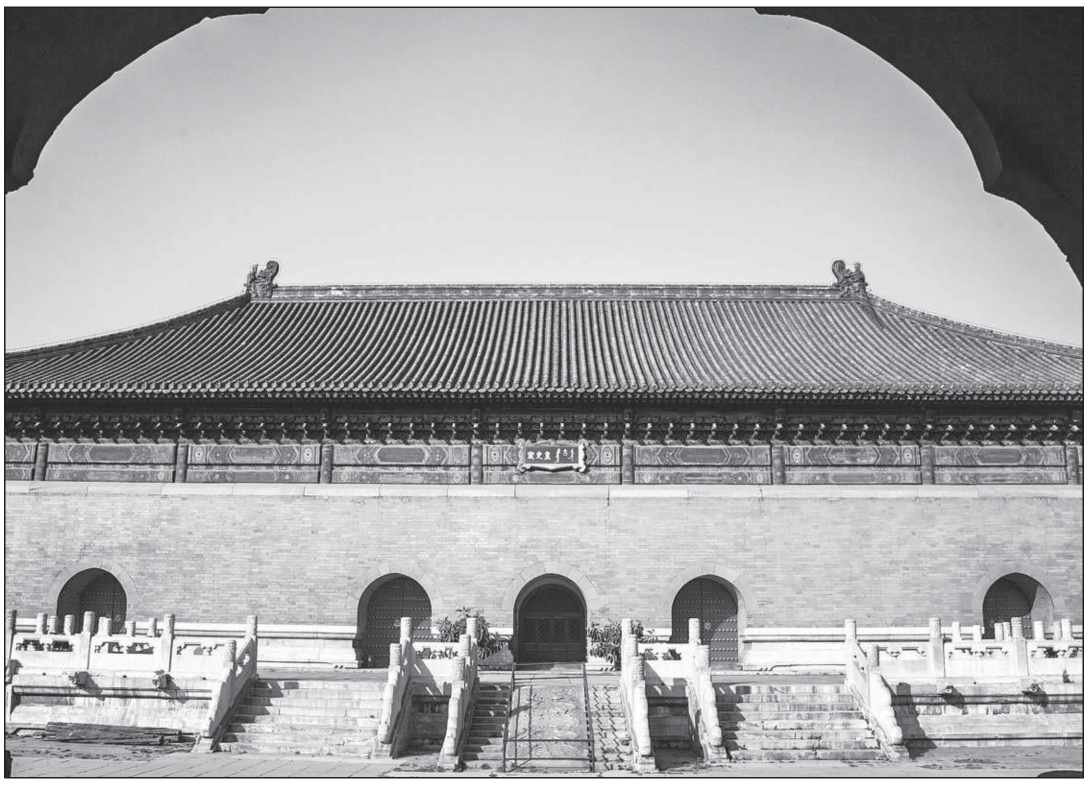
ANN ASIA NEWS NETWORK A member of the Asia News Network

VISIT…

LANZAROTE Caliente.com

PAGE TWO

From page 1



The main building at Huangshicheng, which has been well preserved, is now open to the public. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Complex: Visitors connect with the past

Left and right: The Huangshicheng complex near the Forbidden City took two years to complete. PHOTOS BY ZHAO YAN / FOR CHINA DAILY AND JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

Large golden cabinets known as *jingui* store important archival material in the main building at Huangshicheng. JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

In 2021, the north courtyard at Huangshicheng — which stored archival material in the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties — opened to the public after renovation work. The south courtyard, which is also being renovated, is expected to follow suit soon.

A grand chapter of history at risk of being overshadowed by the Forbidden City is now finally on view to visitors.

In 1534, Emperor Jiajing (1507-67) decided to build a stone complex to house imperial files, fearing they might be destroyed by fire in the wooden buildings of the Forbidden City.

It took two years to complete the complex, which initially comprised the main palace, east and west side halls, and a gate. A pavilion was added next to the main palace during the reign of Emperor Jiaqing (1796-1820) to house a tablet bearing words written by him recounting refurbishment work carried out to the complex during his reign.

Wu said the complex also features nine glazed statues of mythical creatures on the rooftop of the main palace.

"The number of statues denotes the status of this building. Huangshicheng has nine statues, second only to those of Taihedian, or the Hall of Supreme Harmony, the biggest palace in the Forbidden City, where emperors held grand ceremonies," Wu added.

As a symbolic ancient complex situated alongside the central axis of Beijing, Huangshicheng enriches the historical and cultural connotations of the axis, and bears witness to the city's ancient history, Wu said.

The central axis, which boasts a history of more than 750 years, stretches for 7.8 kilometers from the Bell and Drum Tower in the north to Yongding Gate in the south. Many landmarks, including the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven, are located on or alongside the axis.

History of debate

As Emperor Jiajing spent much time and effort in building Huangshicheng, he probably wanted to produce far more than a safe stone house to store historical records.

Jiajing succeeded to the throne from his cousin, Emperor Zhengde (1491-1521), who died childless. According to ancient tradition, Jiajing had to be "adopted" posthumously by his late uncle to correctly extend the royal lineage.

However, he did not want such an "adoption", but expected to honor his biological father through rituals held exclusively for emperors. His wishes triggered lasting and widespread debate among officials over such rites.

Li Weiwen, an architectural archaeologist at the Palace Museum, considers Huangshicheng an example of how Jiajing made clear his views on rites by having the complex built.

"(Amid the controversy), Jiajing found it difficult to directly lend his father's name to sacrifices at imperial ancestral temples, so he switched to designing a new center for rites ceremonies," Li said.

Huangshicheng was also a crucial part of Jiajing's ambitious plan to introduce a new ceremonial system that did not rely solely on temples.

He finally won the debate, thus consolidating his rule. Jiajing largely altered the layout of the center of Beijing by remodeling the Forbidden City and many other examples of stately architecture in the capital.

Wu said, "After the imperial years ended, the role of Huangshicheng took in national politics, and royal rites no longer existed, but its cultural significance in prolonging the cultural lineage of Chinese civilization continues to highlight its exceptional status."

Rich legacies

In Huangshicheng's main palace, the most important archival material was placed in large golden cabinets known as *jingui*, with each one weighing 166 kilograms. The interiors of the cabinets were made from *nanmu*, a precious mothproof wood, and the exteriors — which featured engraved patterns of dragons and clouds — from a mixture of gold and copper.

A total of 152 *jingui* still exist, of which 19 were made during the Ming Dynasty and the remainder in the Qing Dynasty. Some of them are on display, with about 30 retained in the main palace, and the rest stored at the First Historical Archives of China for better protection, Wu said.

"The cabinets were made in different times. Although they follow the same format, there are differences in the detailed craftsmanship. Some have more exquisite patterns, while others were made in a relatively perfunctory way," he said.

Wu described how Huangshicheng functioned in the past. When an emperor died, his successor started to organize government officials to compile *shilu* ("veritable records"), chronicles of major events during the reign of the late emperor, and also to gather his important sayings to form another collection called *shengxun* ("the imperial sermon").

After a ceremony in the Forbidden City, *shilu* and *shengxun* were sent to Huangshicheng, where they were placed in the cabinets. Copies of them were sent to the Imperial Palace in Shengjing (present-day Shenyang, Liaoning province). The imperial palace of the early Qing emperors was regarded as their home.

Drawings of how the golden cabinets were arranged remain to this day.

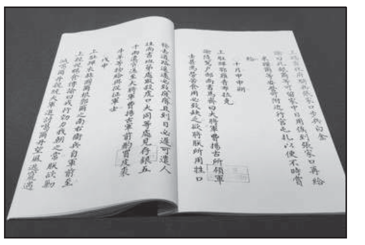
After Huangshicheng was built, Emperor Jiajing ordered 109 people to make a copy of *Yongle Dadian*, the world's largest general encyclopedia made from paper in ancient times, which was commissioned by Emperor Yongle (1360-1424) in 1403.

It took five years to complete this work. The duplicate was stored at Huangshicheng for more than 160 years, before being moved to Hanlinyuan, the imperial academy during the reign of Emperor Yongzheng (1722-35). The original collection has been lost, and the volumes that remain are part of the duplicated versions.

According to records from the time of Emperor Qianlong (1711-99), 19 people worked at Huangshicheng. They guarded the site and placed the documents in the sun in spring and autumn to better preserve them.

Unlike modern archives, where records can be accessed by the public, those stored at Huangshicheng were seldom borrowed unless permission was granted by the emperor. They remained in the cabinets most of the time.

Wu said, "At a time when there were no modern facilities such as air-conditioners, the construction of Huangshicheng shows that the best possible measures were taken to protect the archives from fire and damp, and keep the temperature at which they were stored constant."



Top: Emperor Qianlong's *shilu*, or veritable records, which chronicle major events during the emperor's reign. WANG RU / CHINA DAILY **Above:** A copy of *Yongle Dadian*, the world's largest general encyclopedia made from paper in ancient times. WANG KAIHAO / CHINA DAILY

The main palace is constructed on a platform 1.4 meters above the ground, with the cabinets placed on another platform the same height above the platform, making it difficult for rainwater to reach them.

The main palace was also built with extremely thick walls.

"The south wall is more than 6 meters wide, the north wall exceeds 5 meters, and the east and west walls are both 3.7 meters wide. The walls ensure the palace remains warm in winter and cool in summer," Wu said.

Restoration work

Despite the apparently solid structure of Huangshicheng, time has taken its toll on the buildings.

In its long history, the courtyard has been renovated many times. Such work has been carried out five times since 1949, with the most recent renovation starting in 2020.

Ma Xiangyu, who was engaged for the fifth renovation of Huangshicheng, which focused mainly on the west side hall and the base and walls of the north courtyard, said, "We were required not to change the original face of this cultural heritage, and to minimize interference with the buildings."

In 2019, the first time he visited the complex, Ma saw that each building needed repairs.

"The original base was paved with large bricks, but some of them had become fragmented, as had the glazed tiles. Some bricks in the walls had weathered away, and the tops of the walls were overgrown with weeds," he said.

Drainage posed the biggest problem. With Huangshicheng situated about 50 centimeters below the street running beside it, water often flowed into the complex on rainy days.

Ma said that without an advanced drainage system, the accumulated water sometimes reached up to his shin.

The renovation work, which took place in a central area home to numerous institutions and residents, required much negotiation, and the overall plan was revised three times after problems were found during this process.

The task was not easy for Ma, who was working on reconstructing ancient buildings for the first time.

"Our aim was to repair the old sections and prevent them becoming increasingly eroded. We learned how to do this from ancient construction methods documented in books, or passed down by word of mouth," he said.

Ma was impressed by the sophisticated ancient construction techniques. He said the foundations of the Huangshicheng gate are extremely solid, as elaborate efforts were made to lay them several hundred years ago.

"Although people in ancient times didn't have the technology that we have, they made achievements comparable with those of today. This shows the wisdom of the Chinese in such times," Ma said.

The drainage problem was solved by improving the system. "Since the renovation work was completed, Huangshicheng is no longer flooded on rainy days," he added.

Security and fire protection facilities at the site have also been upgraded.

"We built a security protection and control system by using new technology that meets present-day requirements and plays an important role in safeguarding such an ancient complex," Ma said.

During the renovation work, a door was discovered in the south courtyard at Huangshicheng.

During the reign of Emperor Qianlong, a drawing of Huangshicheng showed a door in the south wall, but buildings had subsequently hidden the door. The newly discovered door, which has also been renovated, matches that depicted in the drawing.

Documents revitalized

Huangshicheng is not the only place to store records from the Ming and Qing dynasties. Documents were also housed in the imperial cabinet repository and other buildings in the Forbidden City.

Chinese dynasties have a tradition of respecting and guarding archives.

Wu said: "The Taoist philosopher Laozi was responsible for keeping imperial files for the royal family in the Zhou Dynasty (c.11th century-256 BC), after which professional agencies managed the archives. Huangshicheng is the oldest and most complete structure of its kind that still stands today in China."

The idea of storing historical records inside golden cabinets in stone-built structures can be traced to *Shiji*, or *Records of the Grand Historian*, the foundation text of Chinese history dating to the 1st century BC.

"The aim was to protect paper-based literature from fire, water and changing temperatures," Wu said.

The First Historical Archives of China are now home to more than 10 million Ming and Qing historical records. Most of them are from the latter dynasty, and they provide a vivid portrait of that era, down to details such as Emperor Qianlong's food and clothing on a specific day, Wu said.

On Feb 15, a display of Ming and Qing historical records — part of exhibitions of "four great discoveries" of the early 20th century from ancient literary artifacts — opened at the National Museum of Classic Books in Beijing, showcasing 123 archival items and related cultural relics.

Some of the archives were stored at Huangshicheng, including Emperor Qianlong's *shengxun* and *shilu*, along with a golden cabinet used originally to store records from the days of Emperor Yongzheng. These items are exhibited with other records such as government decrees, ancient maps and documents about imperial life.

Gu Heng, director of the National Library of China's exhibition department and executive curator of the exhibition, said: "These exhibits were imperial secret records, and they have been preserved well. They systematically record the political, economic and technological development of that era and illustrate many facets of that society, just like an encyclopedia."

Rao Quan, vice-minister of culture and tourism, said at the exhibition's opening ceremony: "During the uninterrupted history of our civilization, Chinese people have created an ocean of literature and archives. They have become carriers of our culture, and play an irreplaceable role in helping us study history, inherit civilization and spread the spirit of our country."

Contact the writers at wangru1@chinadaily.com.cn

Online See more by scanning the code.

TOP NEWS

Ministry mulls policies to boost foreign trade

Nation capable of turning challenges for exports into opportunities, expert says

By LIU ZHIHUA
liuzhihua@chinadaily.com.cn

China is mulling new policy measures to support enterprises and stabilize foreign trade growth, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Shu Jueting, a spokeswoman for the ministry, said at a news conference on Thursday that the ministry and relevant government departments are jointly working on introducing new policies to improve the scale and quality of foreign trade, based on findings from extensive research and surveys.

"The country's foreign trade faces severe external challenges and uncertainties," she said, citing the recent Government Work Report that identified concerns such as high-level global inflation, weakening global economic growth and more containment and suppressive moves against China by some countries.

However, she said, "we are confident that the country is capable of maintaining the growth momentum in foreign trade to inject more support to the overall economic recovery".

The new policies will help fulfill enterprises' and local governments' needs to boost foreign trade, Shu said.

Her remarks came as latest data showed that China's foreign trade in goods was valued at 6.18 trillion yuan ($896 billion) in the first two months of the year, declining 0.8 percent year-on-year. The data reflects the strong resilience of China's foreign trade, Shu said.

The trade value, well above 6 trillion yuan, is the second highest in history over the same period, while the trade quality has achieved improvement with private enterprises showing more vitality, trade ties with emerging markets getting strengthened, and exports of high-tech and high-value-added products surging, she added.

Experts said that despite challenges, China's exports are expected to keep growing this year.

Ning Jizhe, vice-chairman of the Economic Affairs Committee of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, said there is still plenty of room for China's exports to grow.

"To stabilize export growth, it is important for China to produce and export products the world really needs," said Ning, who is also vice-chairman of the China Center for International Economic Exchanges.

"China is capable of turning challenges facing its exports into opportunities," he said, adding that this is because China has a complete industrial chain system and energetic foreign trade market entities, which can flexibly adjust their products and services to adapt to external changes.

Shu, the spokeswoman, revealed that the next China Import and Export Fair, also known as the 133rd Canton Fair, will be held offline in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, from April 15 to May 5. Its online platform will also be operated to provide all-day services to participants.

The combined size of the trade fair's exhibition areas will be expanded to a new high of 1.5 million square meters, compared with 1.18 million square meters previously. There will be 54 professional exhibition areas, and more than 30,000 enterprises have signed up for offline participation.

In response to media inquiries on coal imports from Australia, Shu said that China implements automatic licensing management for such imports, and the licenses can be applied for normally.

China is willing to communicate with Australia on technical issues to seek win-win solutions, she said, adding that Australia should meet China halfway and provide fair, open and nondiscriminatory business environment for Chinese enterprises in Australia.

Welcome back

Ha Van Sieu, deputy head of the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, presents souvenirs to Chinese tourists at the Huu Nghi International Border Gate in northern Vietnam's Lang Son Province on Wednesday. A ceremony was held to welcome the first group of Chinese tourists to the country in three years. The tourists, totaling 120, were greeted with beautiful gifts and traditional performances. HU JIALI / XINHUA

Decision to set up new HK, Macao work office receives wide support

By OASIS HU
and XI TIANQI in Hong Kong

Central government departments and the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions expressed firm support for a decision to establish a new Hong Kong and Macao work office under the Communist Party of China Central Committee, saying that it will better facilitate the steady implementation of the "one country, two systems" principle.

On Thursday, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council released a plan on reforming Party and State institutions. A Hong Kong and Macao work office of the CPC Central Committee will be formed on the basis of the existing Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, according to the plan. The new office will function as a working body of the CPC Central Committee. The name of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council will be retained.

In a statement on Thursday, the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office said the reform reflects the great importance President Xi Jinping attaches to and his deep care for the practice of "one country, two systems" in Hong Kong and Macao.

The decision also reflects the determination and will of the CPC Central Committee to adhere to and improve the "one country, two systems" principle, it said. The office pledged to firmly back the decision and diligently carry out the reform task.

The Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong SAR said the new office will undertake research, coordination and supervision of vital issues related to Hong Kong and Macao. Its establishment will further promote Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability and help the city integrate into national development.

Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR John Lee Ka-chiu and Chief Executive of the Macao SAR Ho Iat-seng also expressed firm backing for the decision. Lee expressed appreciation for the central authorities' deep care, and vowed to maintain effective communications with the new office.

Starry Lee Wai-king, a Hong Kong member of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the nation's top legislative body, said the reform will help Hong Kong and Macao better seek development opportunities and enable the two regions to implement the "one country, two systems" principle more accurately.

Tam Yiu-chung, a former member of the NPC Standing Committee, said the reform demonstrates the importance the central government attaches to Hong Kong and Macao, noting that many significant State departments are under the direct management of the central authorities.

Lau Siu-kai, a consultant of the Chinese Association of Hong Kong and Macao Studies, stressed that the Party is the top architect and executor of the "one country, two systems" principle. Enhancing the CPC's management over Hong Kong affairs is good for the city to better leverage the nation's resources to promote its prosperity and align with national strategies.

Contact the writers at oasishu@chinadailyhk.com

Initiative: Cultural diversity emphasized

From page 1

Political leaders who took part in the virtual meeting spoke positively about Xi's initiative and expressed their willingness to work with the CPC to play a guiding role in promoting exchanges and mutual learning of civilizations and pursuing a path toward modernization based on their own national contexts.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, who is also the president of the African National Congress, the ruling party of South Africa, said that he fully agrees with Xi's initiative.

The history of South Africa in struggling for national independence makes its people value the importance of unity, harmony, inclusiveness and mutual respect, he said.

The initiative is particularly important considering the destructive challenges that the world is facing, such as climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, terrorism and geopolitical confrontation, Ramaphosa added.

He also said that South Africa appreciates China's foreign policy based on noninterference in domestic affairs and mutually beneficial cooperation, which are reflected in China's global initiatives and are crucial to promoting the collective growth of developing countries.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, also president of the Serbian Progressive Party, said that the world is expecting China to provide innovative solutions to coping with challenges amid the complex changes of the international landscape.

Vucic said humanity should work together to advocate the diversity of cultures and civilizations.

The Serbian president also said, echoing Xi's speech on Wednesday, that nations should uphold the principles of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness and should, as Xi said, "let cultural exchanges transcend estrangement, mutual learning transcend clashes, and inclusiveness transcend any sense of superiority".

In his speech, Xi, who is also Chinese president and chairman of the Central Military Commission, underlined the need for all countries to refrain from imposing their own values or models on others and from stoking ideological confrontation.

At a moment when geopolitical competition has brought about crises and challenges, Xi's initiatives regarding development, security and civilization are very significant to international and regional peace and cooperation, said Mongolian Prime Minister Luvsannamsrain Oyun-Erdene, who is also chairman of the Mongolian People's Party.

He added that Mongolia fully supports the initiatives, and mutual trust, dialogue and cooperation are common aspirations of humanity and represent the future of the world.

South Sudan's President Salva Kiir, who is also chairman of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, criticized a number of countries' reluctance to build an equitable and balanced global governance system. These nations are eager to instigate geopolitical competition, resulting in complex global security threats, he said.

Given the current international landscape, leaders of political parties need to carry forward the common values of humanity, advocate respect for various development paths and diversified cultures, and oppose ideological confrontations in various forms, Kiir said.

Xi also elaborated on Chinese modernization in his speech. "We must uphold the principle of independence and explore diversified paths toward modernization," he said.

It is the people of a country that are in the best position to say what kind of modernization best suits them, Xi said, adding that developing countries have the right and ability to independently explore a modernization path with distinctive features based on their national realities.

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, also chairman of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela, said there is no universal model for modernization that applies to all countries.

Some countries attempt to impose their own models on others in disregard of countries' differences in political, cultural and historical contexts, Maduro said.

US urged to stop slandering TikTok

By FAN FEIFEI
fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn

Inside
Editorial, **page 8**

China urged the United States on Thursday to stop spreading false information on data security issues and unreasonably suppressing related companies, as Washington had yet to provide evidence that Chinese-owned short video platform TikTok threatened US national security.

The US government should provide an open, fair and nondiscriminatory environment for companies from all countries to invest and operate in the US, Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a daily news briefing.

Wang made the remark after The Wall Street Journal quoted anonymous sources as saying that the administration of US President Joe Biden has demanded that TikTok's Chinese parent company ByteDance sell its stakes in the popular video-sharing app or face a possible US ban on the app.

China always holds that the data security issue shouldn't be a tool that some countries leverage to generalize the concept of national security and abuse state power to suppress companies from other countries, Wang said.

"We remain confident that the best path forward to addressing concerns about national security is transparent, US-based protection of US user data and systems, with robust third-party monitoring, vetting and verification, which we are already implementing," a TikTok spokesperson said in a statement on Thursday.

"If protecting national security is the objective, a ban or divestment doesn't solve the problem, as neither option solves the issues of data access or transfer," the company said, adding that a forced sale won't resolve national security issues.

Bai Ming, deputy director of international market research at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said the US uses the "national security threat" as an excuse to contain the rise of Chinese companies, which completely deviates from the principle of fair competition in a free market.

"Such practices will not only affect the normal business activities of Chinese companies in the US and violate their legitimate interests, but also harm the rights of US consumers, given that TikTok has gained wide popularity among the country's younger generation," Bai said.

Late last month, the White House required all US federal agencies to remove TikTok from their phones and systems within 30 days, and Canada announced that it is banning TikTok from all government-issued mobile devices.

Li Yong, deputy head of the Expert Committee of the China Association of International Trade, said that the US government uses political measures to crack down on Chinese companies operating in the US, which is a kind of hegemony that severely damages TikTok's corporate image and reputation, and also violates international economic and trade rules.

TikTok has announced it will spend $1.5 billion on a plan known as "Project Texas", in a bid to bolster data security through storing US-based user data in the servers of US tech company Oracle.

It also announced a series of new measures last week to strengthen the protection of user data in Europe. These measures include further enhancing controls on access to user data by introducing security gateways that will determine employee access to European TikTok user data and data transfers outside of Europe.

The company also plans to build its second data center in Ireland, and another in Norway. Last year, TikTok established its first European data center in Dublin, Ireland. All of these data centers will be co-location sites operated by third-party service providers, the company said.

Helping hand

A member of the medical detachment of the Chinese peacekeeping force in Lebanon examines a patient at a village in the south of the country on Monday. At the invitation of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, the medical detachment donated medicine and provided free clinical services to local residents. LI CHENGJUN / XINHUA

Banks: China guarded by stable interest rates

From page 1

The bank's shares opened at 2.28 Swiss francs ($2.46) per share on Wednesday morning, before falling to 1.55 francs, and closing at an all-time low of 1.70. However, its share price soared more than 30 percent on Thursday morning, after the bank announced it will borrow up to 50 billion Swiss francs from the Swiss National Bank, the country's central bank.

Credit Suisse's problems followed the sudden collapse of Silicon Valley Bank in the United States, which was caused by asset-liability mismatch risks. On Wednesday, European banks also saw their prices slashed by 6 percent on average, while big US banks like JPMorgan Chase and Citigroup each fell about 5 percent.

Cases similar to Credit Suisse and SVB are unlikely to happen in China thanks to the country's orderly and stable interest rate environment, reasonably ample liquidity and banks' prudential management, said Xiao Feifei, chief banking industry analyst at CITIC Securities.

The People's Bank of China, the Chinese central bank, said in a statement released on Wednesday that efforts will be made to further consolidate the mechanism to deal with financial crisis, strengthen supervision, and warn about and evaluate financial risks.

Unlike the US or Europe, where interest rates have risen sharply after the COVID-19 pandemic, China's interest rates have remained largely stable. The interbank short-term interest rates and mid- to long-term government bond interest rates have stayed at relatively low levels compared to historical data, said Ni Jun, chief banking industry analyst at GF Securities.

The huge loss confronting US and European banks related with government bond investment does not exist among Chinese banks. Most Chinese banks' assets have been invested in the real economy over the past two years, he said.

As Switzerland's second-largest bank, Credit Suisse has faced serious problems in recent years. Its assets totaled $574 billion at the end of last year, down 30.7 percent from 2021 and 37 percent in 2020.

"Credit Suisse has been a (slow)-moving car crash for years it seems, but now today's news of course is happening in the vortex of SVB," wrote Peter Boockvar, chief investment officer at Bleakley Financial, reported CNBC.

Zhou Lanxu in Beijing contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at shijing@chinadaily.com.cn

CHINA

Red alert for white snow

People brave heavy snow in Ruyang county of Luoyang, Henan province, on Thursday. Cities including Luoyang, Pingdingshan and Sanmenxia in the province issued red alerts for snow storms.
GAO SHANYUE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Officials call for improved health system

Ideas include fixing 'short planks' and patriotic movement for better hygiene

By LI LEI
lilei@chinadaily.com.cn

110 billion yuan
Funds earmarked by central authorities since 2020 to hospitals of all levels, which have helped improve China's treatment capacity for COVID-19.

Central government officials on Thursday called for efforts to ramp up the detection capability for COVID-19 infections, fix the "short planks" in the country's health system and wage a patriotic health movement to improve hygiene.

The directives came a month after central authorities declared at a key meeting of the top leadership on Feb 16 that the country had secured a "major, decisive victory" over the pandemic.

Liu Dechun, director of the National Development and Reform Commission's resource conservation and environmental protection department, said local authorities need to make sure that COVID-19 cases can be detected, reported and treated early, and extra attention has to be paid to "key places" such as nursing homes, schools and farm produce markets.

Local officials will also have to work to solve "weak links" such as those related to medications and medical devices, he said at a news conference in Beijing. Their supply tends to run low at small health institutions in the case of a health emergency.

The director said cleanup campaigns will also be carried out nationwide with a focus on backstreet alleys, old residential communities and shanty towns, and venues such as small eateries.

The cleanup efforts will be part of the patriotic health campaign, which was first introduced in the 1950s to wipe out rats, flies, mosquitoes and other pests that carry and transmit infectious pathogens.

"Next, the NDRC ... will lose no time in fixing the short planks and make up for the weak points in urban and rural health systems and sanitation works," he said.

The moves had been outlined in a circular issued by eight central government agencies including the NDRC, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and the National Health Commission last month.

The 15-point document said the spread of Omicron infections in China has turned for the better in recent months and the country has steadily moved into a new phase of COVID-19 control with downgraded management of the disease.

Liu said the circular was made in line with the spirit of the Feb 16 meeting, whose participants urged efforts to improve epidemic response measures and mechanisms in the new stage, a strengthened healthcare system and firmly consolidated hard-won achievements.

Speaking at the news conference, Wu Xiangtian, deputy director of the NHC's planning, development and information technology department, said that central authorities have earmarked 110 billion yuan ($15.9 billion) since 2020 to hospitals of all levels, which has helped improve China's treatment capacity for COVID-19.

The commission will continue to work with relevant departments to raise such investments in expanding medical infrastructure and optimize the spread of medical resources, he said.

"We'll also ramp up the construction of 'smart hospitals', improve the digitalization of medical facilities and let medical services expand to rural areas through the internet," Wu said.

Chang Zhaorui, a researcher at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said local authorities will also make an effort to prevent the increased spread of flu, hand-foot-and-mouth disease and norovirus infections in spring and summer.

China faces growing pressure from diseases being imported, such as dengue fever and malaria. "Officials need to keep a close eye on key sections, and advance the disease control work in a coordinated fashion."

Briefly

Former Chongqing legislator under probe

A former senior legislator in Southwest China's Chongqing municipality is under a probe for suspected severe violations of Party discipline and laws, according to an official statement released on Thursday. Zheng Hong, former vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the Chongqing People's Congress and former deputy secretary of the standing committee's leading Party members group, is being investigated by the Communist Party of China Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the National Commission of Supervision, the statement said.

China accepting bids for overseas shows

China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism announced on Wednesday that it will resume accepting applications for commercial performances involving people from overseas, starting from March 20. The announcement said that local governments should continue to strengthen the management of commercial performance activities, urge performance organizers to implement the new epidemic prevention and control measures, and continue to promote the development of the performing arts market and serve the general public. Starting from Feb 16, applications for commercial performances involving people from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan were resumed.

Long March 11 rocket hits 16 launches

China's Long March 11 carrier rocket has successfully carried out 16 consecutive launches as of Wednesday, according to its developer. A Long March 11 rocket on Wednesday evening sent the experimental satellite Shiyan 19 into space, marking the rocket's 16th successful launch since it was put into service in 2015, according to China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology of the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation. A four-stage solid launch vehicle, the Long March 11 carrier rocket is about 21 meters long and weighs 57.7 metric tons, with its maximum diameter reaching two meters. It has been developed to launch small spacecraft into solar synchronous orbit and low Earth orbit, with a carrying capacity to solar synchronous orbit of 500 kg.

XINHUA—CHINA DAILY

PATH TO MODERNIZATION | ANHUI

Hefei benefits from lake conservation

By ZHU LIXIN in Hefei
zhulixin@chinadaily.com.cn

The mayor of Hefei, Anhui province, is emphasizing conservation of the city's abundant wetland resources for more eco-friendly modernization.

Hefei has been a hot spot for enterprises and talent in recent years, with the city's gross domestic product surpassing 1.2 trillion yuan ($172 billion) and its permanent resident population increasing last year by nearly 170,000 to more than 9.63 million.

"While pursuing high-quality development, we will keep striving to enable residents to enjoy their environment more," Mayor Luo Yunfeng said.

Luo, who is also a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress, said during this year's two sessions that the city now has one wetland site of national stature, plus five national and three provincial wetland parks, with an area totaling 118,200 hectares. It also has the province's highest wetland protection rate of 76 percent.

In January, three rare Dalmatian pelicans (*Pelecanus crispus*) were observed for the first time at the city's Chaohu Lake, the country's fifth-largest freshwater lake.

"Chaohu Lake and the 10 major wetland habitats around it have 562 plant species and 381 bird species. More bird and plant species have been found in the region in recent years," Luo said, adding that last year marked a milestone for Hefei's wetland conservation efforts.

Luo Yunfeng

During the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands held in November in Wuhan, Hubei province, Hefei was accredited as an international wetland city.

The accreditation has been awarded to 43 cities around the world, including 13 in China.

Luo, who has been working in Hefei since 2017, said the city's wetland sites are not only attracting many migratory birds seeking shelter during their travels but are also a popular destination for locals to take a stroll.

He said he had learned that the situation was otherwise not too many years ago.

"With the accelerating industrialization and urbanization, the watershed of Chaohu Lake had once been subject to an explosively rising population and worsening water pollution," Luo said.

In 1996, the central authorities listed the lake and its feeder rivers as key targets for pollution control.

The city has taken a number of measures to protect the environment around the lake, including banning fishing and turning agricultural fields into wetlands.

The central authorities listed Hefei in 2017 as one of 28 cities for a pilot program to increase the capacity to adapt to climate change through a combination of measures.

The measures included building more climate-resilient infrastructure and facilities and improving the roles of urban wetland ecosystems, such as urban lakes, to address climate change, according to documents of the pilot program.

In 2018, the Hefei government made a plan to strive for the international wetland city accreditation and launched a major project to restore 10 wetland sites.

To make the goals irrevocable, the standing committee of the Hefei People's Congress, the local legislative body, made a regulation exclusively for the wetlands in 2019, Luo said. The regulation drew the initial boundaries of the wetland sites and ruled that their sizes and ecological functions could not be degraded.

By July last year, when the project was completed, the sites had seen a total investment of 5.85 billion yuan, with 7,005 rural households relocated away from the areas.

For the first two months of this year, the water quality of the lake remained at Grade 3 under China's six-tier quality system for surface water, according to the government.

Restored wetlands attract spotted seals

By WU YONG in Shenyang
wuyong@chinadaily.com.cn

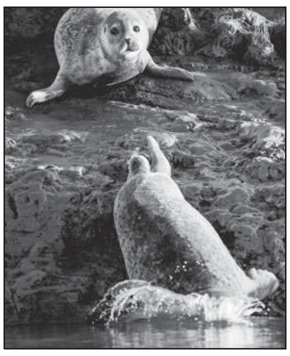
The population of spotted seals in the coastal city of Panjin in Northeast China has increased in the past decade, benefitting from the nation's long-term efforts in wetland restoration.

The spotted seal is classed as a national first-class protected wild animal. The seals come to Panjin, Liaoning province from colder waters at high latitudes every December to prey and rest in the area before returning northward in May.

The number of the seals spotted along the city's coastline has risen from 100 to around 200 over the past 10 years, according to the Panjin government.

"The best protection for them is for us to stay away," said Tian Jiguang, head of the Panjin Spotted Seal Protection Association.

Spotted seals have extremely high requirements for their habitat, and even the low murmur of a ship engine will force them to leave.



The spotted seals in Panjin, Liaoning province. ZHAO ZHENMIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

According to Liu Ye, head of the wetland management division of the Panjin Forestry and Wetland Protection Administration, in the past 10 years the local authorities have taken measures to protect spotted seals, such as by increasing the area of protected wetland, enforcing fishing restrictions and introducing better ecological management.

The area of protected wetlands in the city has increased from 80,000 hectares in 2010 to 124,000 hectares at present, the largest such expansion in the entire country.

After years of persuasion, local fishermen have relinquished part of their working area for spotted seals to rest, and have even agreed to report if they see any seals that have been injured or are stranded.

An observation tower was set up on the core habitat area of the seals to support scientific research.

Wang Xiwu, director of the Nature Reserve Management Office of Liaoning Forestry and Grassland Bureau, said that the government will continue to carry out special enforcement actions for the seals, strengthen the construction of wetland reserves and create a suitable habitat for them.

Special serenade

Volunteers put on an exclusive music show for a 92-year-old man in the Chaoyang community of Huzhou, Zhejiang province, on Wednesday. A volunteer team of music lovers was established in the community to provide comfort for the elderly with mobility issues. WENG XINYANG / XINHUA

Spotlight exposes online fraud targeting elderly

By ZOU SHUO
zoushuo@chinadaily.com.cn

Scams targeting seniors took center stage at this year's annual "315 Gala" hosted by State broadcaster China Central Television on Wednesday, which coincided with World Consumer Rights Day on March 15.

The gala took aim at livestreaming hosts who try to sell "magic drugs" to elderly people by appealing to their sympathy and gullibility.

They call themselves "sons" and "daughters" to their elderly viewers and put on made-up dramatic shows where the drugs are used to save people's lives and solve family disputes.

In one of the livestreams, the host, Ma Hongliang, claimed that a worker died while trying to harvest snow lotus, a rare plant found in high-altitude ecosystems that people believe can cure disease.

To make amends, the company then decided to give the employee's mother its products made of snow lotus, which cured her disease.

Ma claimed that the drug can cure tumors and its snow lotus can be harvested only once in nine years.

However, the product is only food that is called snow lotus seed and is not a medicine.

A manager surnamed Yin said his company sells such products to livestreaming hosts, which are all food products such as candy and drinks.

"All the stories are fake and people in the livestreaming shows are hired actors. It's all fake," Yin said.

The channels of all the livestreaming hosts exposed at the gala have been suspended.

The market regulation bureau of Handan, Hebei province, had gone to the supply company where Yin works and sealed off the food products found there, according to CCTV.

Market regulation authorities also took away the company's computers and other data. The livestreaming hosts have not been found and local police have started an investigation.

In a separate case, many elderly people received free deliveries containing an audio player with a single recording that can last more than four hours, in which so-called renowned experts and medicine developers sell drugs.

The drugs are sold at 1,000 to 2,000 yuan ($145 to 290) yet they are much cheaper on e-commerce platforms.

A company in Shenzhen that produces such audio players said they only cost about 10 yuan each. Although they are given free to elderly people, the profits of the drugs are very high.

According to ThePaper.cn, market regulators in Shenzhen had gone to the company that makes the audio players and started an investigation.

CHINA

Freight train to Europe links Beijing to BRI

Service opens new 'fast corridor' for intl trade enterprises in capital

By DU JUAN
dujuan@chinadaily.com.cn

6.04 million containers have been transported via China-Europe freight train services since 2011.

The very first freight train from Beijing destined for Europe set off on Thursday, marking the latest milestone for the Chinese capital in its participation in the Belt and Road Initiative, according to a senior local official.

Departing Mafang Station in Pinggu district, the freight train loaded with 55 containers will travel north and exit the country via the land port of Manzhouli in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region before arriving in Moscow, Russia, 18 days later.

The cargo of auto parts, construction materials, home appliances, clothes and household goods, will travel around 9,000 kilometers, according to the Pinggu district government on Thursday.

"The train opens a new international fast freight corridor linking China with Europe, adding to Beijing's foreign trade transport network," said Yin Hang, deputy secretary-general of the Beijing city government.

Located in the northeastern suburbs of Beijing, Pinggu district functions as a "comprehensive logistics port" for the capital. In recent years, the district has attracted a growing number of domestic and foreign logistics enterprises.

Di Tao, head of the district government, said on Thursday before the train set off that Pinggu will increase the two-way transportation capacity of the train based on the huge consumption demand of the capital, and promised to expand routes to better serve Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei province.

"We will continue to strengthen the construction of railway stations and other facilities, to build the land port into a national logistics hub and integrate it into the national modern logistics system," he said.

Mafang Station has become the starting point for Beijing's integration into the Belt and Road Initiative, according to the district.

The first train carried goods from Taitong International Transportation Co, whose main business is international multimodal transport and logistics operations management.

Chu Yixiao, general manager of the company, applauded the route and said the train has provided more development opportunities by delivering goods from Beijing to Europe directly, cutting transport costs and raising efficiency.

According to China State Railway Group, the national railway operator, cross-border freight trains linking China and Europe connect 108 Chinese cities and 208 cities in 25 European countries. Since operations began in 2011, the service has run 65,000 China-Europe trains and transported 6.04 million containers.

The freight trains have contributed a lot to the economic and trade cooperation and cultural exchanges for countries along the routes. Earlier this month, a China-Europe train carrying 100 containers of China-made commodities and ceramic products left Yiwu, a major small commodities hub in East China's Zhejiang province, for Madrid, Spain.

On the same day, a train loaded with 70 containers of Spanish goods, including red wine and olive oil, departed Madrid and headed for Yiwu.

A freight train departs for Moscow, Russia from Beijing's Mafang Station in suburban Pinggu district, becoming the latest cargo service linking China with Europe via railway. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

Singing to the seeds

Villagers sow seeds while singing during a spring plowing ritual in Dagze of Lhasa in the Tibet autonomous region on Thursday. Tibetan people dress up for the annual ceremony to pray for a bumper harvest in the year.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Team develops method for better quantum communication

A Chinese research team has developed a new method for quantum communication, achieving secure communications at a distance of more than 615 kilometers.

The transmission, using a newly designed open configuration of twin-field quantum key distribution, only requires half the amount of optical fiber normally required by conventional closed channels. The innovation shows promise for the building of a wide area quantum network in the country, according to study findings recently published in the journal Nature Communications.

Quantum key distribution allows for the exchange of cryptographic keys securely between shared parties.

Of all the QKD protocols, twin-field is the most viable solution for long-distance secure fiber communication. The communication users of both parties transmit their own optical fields independently to meet at an intermediate station for interference in a twin-field QKD configuration.

The interference outcome is used by the two users for their information reconciliation, so it is important to keep the mutual phase stable. However, the phase varies violently in practice, caused by the frequency difference between the lasers from both parties and the rapid phase fluctuation of the long fiber.

To remedy this problem, the previous configurations of twin-field QKD had adopted a gigantic and resource-inefficient interferometer structure, which means that besides the essential quantum fiber between the QKD's two parties, an additional fiber called the service fiber is needed for optical frequency dissemination, said Yuan Zhiliang, chief scientist at the Beijing Academy of Quantum Information Sciences.

The research team led by Yuan introduced a new technique that stabilizes an open channel without using a closed interferometer or the service fiber, and successfully achieved quantum communications at a distance of 615.6 km.

Zhou Lai, a team member from the BAQIS, explained their findings, noting that in the traditional methods, two lines are necessary for quantum communication between two sites about 615 km apart, while with the new method, one line is enough.

In the twin-field QKD with their open configuration, the team adopted optical frequency comb technology to replace the conventional service fiber to calibrate the frequency of lasers from both parties in the quantum communication, realizing accurate information transmission.

Zhou illustrated the frequency comb as turning a beam of light with a single frequency into multiple beams of light with different frequencies, which are "separated like the row of teeth on a comb".

The frequency comb technology serves the additional function of solving the problem of fiber drifts, which inevitably occur during long-distance quantum communication, Zhou said, explaining that the comb works by greatly reducing the impact of noise on quantum signals, thus ensuring the accuracy of information transmission over long distances.

During an interview with Xinhua, the team demonstrated their research results through an optical fiber with a core diameter of about 10 microns and a length of 615 km, successfully completing the long-distance quantum communication.

The twin-field QKD system with the open configuration is still relatively large, and the team is currently in the process of developing a photonic chip measuring 1 square centimeter to integrate various device modules used in the QKD system, Yuan said.

"Once the chip has been successfully developed, devices used for quantum communication could be carried around like portable laptops," he added.

XINHUA

Viral videos spur college kids to try Zibo's barbecue

By ZHAO RUIXUE
zhaoruixue@chinadaily.com.cn

The publicity department of the city of Zibo in Shandong province is thanking its lucky stars after a group of tech-savvy college students were able to achieve something they had been unable to for the past few years — make Zibo's special barbecue go viral.

Zibo has long sought to publicize its unique take on roasted skewers of meat, veggies, seafood and assorted other foodstuffs, hoping that it would become a must-try "brand" of the city. Until late February this year, the publicity of Zibo barbecue had achieved limited success. That is, until some college students attending a job fair in the city went to try the barbecue and took videos of themselves enjoying the food and posted them onto social media.

The passionate youths unknowingly started a trend that has spurred the hashtag: "College students visit Zibo to try barbecue in groups" to go viral on social media.

As of Wednesday, videos related to the hashtag had surpassed 45.15 million views on Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok.

As a result of going viral, youths from across the country have started to pour into Zibo to try its now famous barbecue.

What makes barbecue special in Zibo is that the skewers are 70-80 percent cooked before being brought to the table, where diners can finish off the cooking at their own little stove of hot coals. On top of that, diners have pancakes, scallions and other dressings at the table so they are able to assemble their own barbecue-filled package a bit like how traditional Peking duck is prepared.

Xu Jiayue, a student from Shandong Transport Vocational College, came to Zibo from neighboring city Weifang to try the barbecue for herself on Tuesday.

"The stoves allow us to cook the meat, which gives us a feeling of participation, and it allows us to eat the meat at a perfect temperature, which ensures a good taste and flavor," she said.

Zibo, a city with 4.5 million people, has had record numbers of arrivals at its train station since March 4. A total of 27,065 visitors arrived on Saturday, setting a record for daily passengers arriving at the railway station in the past three years.

College students from neighboring cities accounted for a large proportion of the passengers, officials from the train station said.

On Wednesday afternoon, one barbecue restaurant owner said that there were long lines outside the restaurant every day for the past two weeks.

Several restaurants said they were selling more than 10,000 skewers of meat, chicken wings or vegetables a day during the past week, especially on the weekend.

Once the hungry diners have had their fill of barbecue, many of them have been setting out to see Zibo's other attractions while they're in the area.

"Zibo barbecue going viral is not accidental," Yin Qidi, head of the city's commerce bureau, said at a news conference held to address the barbecue craze on Friday.

The once traditional industrial city has been putting a lot of effort into developing the city into a young people friendly one, Yin said, adding that the city offers rooms with extra discounts in designated hotels to outside visitors between the ages of 18 and 35.

Local statistics showed several hotels offering such services for young people were fully booked on Wednesday.

To capitalize on its recent fame, the city plans to hold a barbecue festival around the May Day holiday, said Yin.

Authorities including the market supervision and public security have joined in to ensure food safety and reasonable pricing in the "barbecue sector", and the city's public transportation company has opened 21 bus lines especially for transporting people to barbecue restaurants.

Coastal city taps market for blue carbon

By MA ZHENHUAN in Hangzhou
mazhenhuan@chinadaily.com.cn

Ningbo, a coastal city in Zhejiang province, is bringing into play the potential of its ecosystems to achieve carbon neutrality, as 2,340 metric tons of "blue carbon" credits were auctioned off in the city on Tuesday.

The concept was introduced in the report Blue Carbon: The Role of Healthy Oceans in Binding Carbon by the United Nations Environment Programme in collaboration with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 2009.

It refers to carbon that is absorbed from the atmosphere and stored in coastal and marine ecosystems. Scientific studies show that the ocean stores 50 times more carbon than the atmosphere, and 20 times more than land plants and soil combined. Mangroves, tidal marshes and seagrasses are recognized as three major blue carbon sinks as both their plants and sediment below can sequester and store large quantities of carbon.

Based on the quantity of carbon they absorb and store, the ecosystems generate blue carbon credits that are sold to buyers who want to offset their carbon emissions.

The market for blue carbon credits is relatively new in China. Those sold on Tuesday were generated by three varieties of algae — kelp, seaweed and sea lettuce — at Xihu Port in the city's Xiangshan county.

"Algae is part of marine fishery carbon sinks. Due to accounting difficulties, it has not entered the international carbon markets. It's a blue ocean of blue carbon trading," said Yan Xiaojun, the Party secretary of Zhejiang Ocean University.

It was the first time a blue carbon credit has been auctioned in China.

He Congying, an associate researcher at Ningbo Institute of Oceanography, stressed that such auctions will promote the development of ecological products, and encourage company engagement in protection efforts.

Wang Yuan, a manager at Zhejiang Yiduan Precision Machinery, which won the auction, said the blue carbon credits will be used to offset the company's carbon emissions.

Zhu Wenrong, general manager of Xuwen Seaweed, sold nearly 200 tons of blue carbon credits at the auction.

"The sea lettuce that we raise is a great carbon sink. Now we can turn its ecological value into cash."

Zhu said the income from the auction will be used in research on sea lettuce cultivation and its carbon sequestration.

"I hope Xiangshan's blue carbon economy and coastal economy will receive more attention," he said.

In June, Ningbo released a strategy to reach peak carbon emissions and carbon neutrality, which included improving blue carbon ecosystems and tapping the market for blue carbon credits.

Ding Dewen, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering, said, "It will serve as a model for the development of blue carbon projects in coastal cities across the country."

Yu Yin contributed to this story.

Over the moon

Zhang Zhongqiang (center left), a master in colored clay sculpture, introduces *tuerye*, or Rabbit Lord, an iconic cultural element of Beijing, to diplomats from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization countries in Beijing on Thursday. The exhibition features designs of auspicious Chinese zodiac animals — this year being the rabbit. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

Province's deputies lay out green future vision

China Shanxi

Shanxi delegation puts forward more than 250 proposals at National People's Congress held in Chinese capital

By YUAN SHENGGAO

From left: National People's Congress deputies from Shanxi discuss the motions and proposals they plan to put forward during the annual NPC session. Shanxi's NPC deputies study the Government Work Report. PHOTOS BY LI LIANJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

National People's Congress deputies from Shanxi province fulfilled their missions at this year's NPC session, held in Beijing from March 5 to 13, by putting forward motions and proposals on legislative issues and those relating to national and local socioeconomic development.

The Shanxi NPC delegation proposed five motions: promoting legislation for urban and rural community governance; revising laws on the protection of cultural relics, road traffic safety and charity; as well as enhancing legislative supervision on the prevention and control of contagious diseases.

The deputies put forward a total of 254 proposals, including seven joint proposals. The delegation's joint proposals include making the Taiyuan Energy Low Carbon Development Forum a regular international event; building a high-speed railway linking Shanxi and Shandong provinces; enhancing Shanxi's role in the experimental zone for the ecological protection and the high-quality development of the Yellow River Basin; giving stronger financial support for upgrading coal mines toward more intelligent and safer operations; and developing the city cluster in central Shanxi into a national demonstration area for the commercialization of scientific and technological achievements.

The energy sector is a focus of the proposals from the Shanxi delegation. One proposal is for the annual Taiyuan Energy Low Carbon Development Forum to become a regular international event and a platform to aid international exchanges in the field of low-carbon and sustainable energy development.

Taiyuan forum

The forum is also aimed at showcasing Shanxi's and China's transformation in the energy industry.

As a major energy base in China and a pilot zone for energy industry transformation, Shanxi is now implementing an energy revolution campaign, which features the upgrading of traditional coal mining, coking and coal-fired power generation industries and promoting the development of clean, renewable energy resources.

As a result of industrial upgrades driven by digital, intelligent and environmentally friendly technologies, about 80 percent of Shanxi's coal output in 2022, which stood at 1.3 billion metric tons, was produced by advanced facilities with cleaner, safer and more efficient operations.

Shanxi is among the country's leaders in the development of new and clean energy resources.

For instance, Shanxi is one of the provinces in China with the richest coal-bed methane resources and is a pioneer for the safe development of the gas. Its output of the gas now takes up 83.2 percent of the national total.

The province's total installed capacity of new-energy power plants reached 49 million kilowatts, accounting for 40.25 percent of Shanxi's total.

Shanxi's NPC deputies said they hope the Taiyuan forum becomes a venue to showcase the province's best practices in energy industry transformation, as well as those from the rest of the world.

The event is also expected to become a stage for diplomacy, showing China's commitment to low-carbon, sustainable development. It is also aimed at becoming a platform to enhance multilateral collaborations in the energy industry and promote international cooperation in tackling global climate change.

Intelligent operations

In a proposal related to upgrading coal mines toward more intelligent and safer operations, Shanxi's NPC deputies called for increased financial support from the State.

Shanxi now views smart coal mining a crucial link in Shanxi's energy revolution campaign and is vigorously promoting industrial digitalization in the coal mining industry.

Local statistics show that the province is currently home to 37 smart coal mines and 993 smart coal-mining shafts. Intelligent operations like remote-sensing shaft surveillance, unmanned coal cutting and automatic coal conveyance are conducive to improving both efficiency and safety.

However, the digitalized upgrades of coal mines need large sums of investment. So Shanxi's NPC deputies said that the State can play a crucial role in supporting the upgrades.

They suggested preferential taxation and financial policies be used to encourage the construction of safer, more efficient and more environmentally friendly coal mines, especially those smaller-sized ones, which are relatively weak in technological and financial resources, when they are launching projects for digitalization and automation.

Experimental zone

The Shanxi NPC deputies proposed enhancing the province's role in the experimental zone for the ecological protection and the high-quality development of the Yellow River Basin.

The 5,464-kilometer Yellow River is the second-longest river in China. The Shanxi section of the river is 965 km in length.

More than 73.1 percent of the land in Shanxi is part of the river's drainage basin, which is home to 73.4 percent of the province's population. As Shanxi is located on the Loess Plateau, where soil erosion has been a severe challenge for millennia, it holds an important position in the ecological condition of the Yellow River.

Shanxi began to implement its strategy in becoming an experimental zone for ecological protection and high-quality development in the Yellow River's drainage region in 2017. Since then, provincial authorities have put the strategy high on their agenda.

Shanxi released its implementation plan for building an experimental zone for the ecological protection and the high-quality development of the Yellow River Basin in September 2022, calling for measures to curb soil erosion, protect the environment and promote low-carbon, green industrial transformation.

The deputies said this plan has been submitted to the National Development and Reform Commission for approval, aiming to spread Shanxi's experience among provinces and regions along the Yellow River.

Demonstration area

In one of its joint proposals, the Shanxi NPC delegation called for the State's approval for the city cluster in central Shanxi to become a national demonstration area for the commercialization of scientific and technological achievements.

In 2021, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council released a guideline to step up the high-quality development of several city clusters in China's central regions. The city cluster in central Shanxi, which comprises Taiyuan, Jinzhong, Xinzhou, Lyuliang and Yangquan, is on the list.

The city cluster accounts for 47.3 percent of the land area and 46.3 percent of the population in Shanxi. In 2021, its GDP took up 50 percent of the provincial total.

It is a region with the best industrial basis and development potential in Shanxi, boasting many resources for economic growth, including four State-level development zones; 36 provincial-level development zones; and 73.2 percent of Shanxi's higher-learning institutions and research institutes, as well as a solid industrial basis featuring traditional, emerging and high-tech industries.

The Shanxi Transformation and Comprehensive Reform Demonstration Zone, located in Taiyuan and Jinzhong, is the leading development zone in Shanxi. It is piloting Shanxi's economic transformation, which is designed to upgrade traditional industries for higher-efficiency, cleaner and safer operations, and cultivating emerging industries as new growth engines. The zone has such industries as advanced manufacturing, the digital economy, biomedicines, new energy vehicles, electronic information, smart logistics, modern agriculture and environmental protection.

The Taiyuan-Xinzhou Integrated Economic Zone was launched in 2021. The zone is mobilizing resources in both cities to build industrial clusters centering on new materials and advanced equipment manufacturing, and foster new engines for the province's economic development.

While serving the cities' integration, the zone is designed to host industries and resources that have relocated from the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.

Shanxi's NPC deputies said in the process of building a central Shanxi city cluster and promoting industrial transformation, there is great demand for commercializing the scientific and technological results developed by entities in Shanxi and across the rest of the country.

They added that there are also many scenarios for the commercialization of sciences and technologies, either in upgrading its traditional industries or in developing emerging sectors.

Zhao Xiangnan and Yang Wen contributed to this story.

Admixture a pillar of Wanrong's economy

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Top: Technicians at a concrete admixture company in Wanrong county test products in a laboratory. XUE JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY
Above: One of the concrete admixture research and development facilities in Wanrong. YAN XIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

While the building industry in China has experienced rapid growth over the past decades, few people realize that concrete admixture is a crucial part of this industry.

The admixture, or additive agents in various forms, is used to closely bind cement, sand and gravel together to improve the performance of concrete in erosion resistance, heat insulation and strength.

But for one county in North China's Shanxi province, concrete admixture is known to almost everyone. The niche product has developed into a local economic pillar, offering jobs to tens of thousands of residents.

The Shanxi provincial government released its first batch of 10 provincial-level characteristic towns and the county of Wanrong was on the list thanks to the product.

Developing towns with characteristic industries is a new strategy in Shanxi, which aims to create advantageous industries for local growth.

Wanrong's history in this industry dates back to about 40 years ago. Starting from several small mills producing the additive with primitive equipment and techniques, the industry has evolved into a crucial local industry with a total output value accounting for about one-third of the total for the Chinese market.

The county is now home to 65 concrete admixture producers. They produce more than 1 million metric tons of product varieties a year, with a combined output value of more than 4 billion yuan ($580.8 million).

More than 80,000 Wanrong residents are engaged in the industry, working with local manufacturers or doing sales throughout the country.

Wang Fei, mayor of Wanrong, said local producers are proud that their products have been used for many landmark projects in the country, including the Three Gorges Dam and the Qinghai-Tibet Railway. The products have also reached more than 30 countries and regions.

The official found that a priority on innovation and developing products to meet the diversified demands of clients are among major factors contributing to the industry's growth.

He noted that local enterprises have collaborated closely with renowned research institutions in the country to enhance their competence in research and development.

With the help of the institutions, there are 18 corporate technological centers and other R&D facilities in Wanrong. In addition, there are 15 local companies recognized as high-tech enterprises.

Zhang Zhimin, chairman of local manufacturer Aoruite, said he is a witness to the industry's growth, especially its increasing strength in technological competence.

"About 40 years ago, we used washbasins to produce the additives," Zhang said. "Now, advanced reactors are standard to every producer."

The executive added that local manufacturers are beginning to diversify to segmented markets and are targeting their R&D to meet the diversified demands of clients.

"Our researchers have traveled extensively in the country and the world to study how to develop products to suit regional requirements," Zhang said. "We investigate the differences of cement, sand and gravel in various regions and develop suitable products through numerous analyses, experiments, tests and trials."

County Mayor Wang said he is more optimistic about the industry's future after Wanrong made the list of characteristic towns.

He said the listing will offer an unprecedented opportunity for the industry by accelerating the formation of an industrial cluster and helping to increase the influence and recognition of local products in both domestic and international markets.

Wanrong aims for the concrete admixture industry to have more than 100 manufacturers and an annual output value of 10 billion yuan by 2025.

Zhang Haiying contributed to this story.

Smart coal mining offers huge boost to local energy industry

By YUAN SHENGGAO

When talking about the changes brought by smart coal mining, Zhang Xing, an executive of the Tashan Coal Mine, said he feels a revolution is occurring.

He made the remarks at the operational center of the coal mine, which is a subsidiary of Shanxi's energy giant Jinneng Holding Group.

Zhang faced a huge display screen, showing all the operational conditions, including miners' locations, safety conditions and the machines' operations, with real-time images, vector graphics and data analyses.

"We have realized intelligent coal cutting in seven shafts, ensuring a coal recovery rate of up to 90 percent," he said. "This is also increasing safety and improving the in-shaft environment along with a rising efficiency."

Shanxi is vigorously promoting coal mining upgrades by using 5G-connected and digital technologies.

Local statistics show that Shanxi turned 20 coal mines and 665 mining shafts into smart facilities in 2022. The province is now home to 37 smart coal mines and 993 smart coal mining shafts in total. The facilities feature greater efficiency, better safety and lower pollutant emissions.

In addition, the application of simultaneous extraction of coal and coal-bed methane has further contributed to safer and more efficient energy production.

Coal-bed methane is a form of natural gas and a type of clean fuel. However, the gas presents a danger inside coal mines. It can explode if the concentration of the gas reaches a certain level.

Safe extraction of the gas can help to prevent coal mine accidents by reducing its concentration. The extracted coal-bed methane can then be used as a clean energy resource.

The simultaneous extraction of coal and coal-bed methane technology developed by Shanxi's companies is currently one of most advanced in the industry worldwide.

The technology has made Shanxi one of the country's leaders in coal-bed methane development. Statistics show that, in 2022, local coal mines extracted 6.3 billion cubic meters of coal-bed methane from mining shafts, transporting the gas to consumers as a clean fuel.

The smart coal mines and safe extraction of coal-bed methane are part of Shanxi's current energy revolution campaign, which aims to upgrade the coal mining industry toward safer, cleaner and more efficient operations, while also strengthening the development of clean energy resources. Furthermore, the energy revolution campaign aims to facilitate Shanxi's low-carbon development and help China fulfill its carbon neutrality goals.

The capacity of power generated from clean energy resources including wind and solar energy reached 49 million kilowatts, taking up 41.2 percent of Shanxi's total.

Shanxi is also promoting low-carbon energy development on the demand side, which is demonstrated in the increase of new energy resources in consumption and the decrease in total energy consumption in industrial production.

Statistics show that the energy used for producing the same amount of GDP in the province has decreased 33.2 percent over the past decade. The per-unit GDP energy consumption for 2022 is estimated to drop 3 percent year-on-year, making Shanxi a national leader in this regard.

Shanxi has also stepped up the production and use of hydrogen. The western Shanxi city of Xiaoyi is now a national hub for the hydrogen industry.

Zhang Yi contributed to this story.

A new solar farm built in the county of Wuxiang, which is designed to generate 13.68 million kilowatt-hours of electricity annually. SUN RONGXIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

SPEECH

Join Hands on the Path Towards Modernization

Keynote Address by H.E. Xi Jinping

General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and President of the People's Republic of China at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting

Beijing, March 15, 2023

Leaders of political parties from around the world,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to join all of you for the discussion on "Path Towards Modernization: The Responsibility of Political Parties".

The history of human development is full of twists and turns. Similarly, the journey of each country to explore the path to modernization is also arduous. In today's world, multiple challenges and crises are intertwined. The global economic recovery remains sluggish, the development gap is widening, ecological environment is deteriorating, and the Cold War mentality is lingering. Humanity's modernization process has once again reached a crossroads of history.

Polarization or common prosperity? Pure materialistic pursuit or coordinated material and cultural-ethical advancement? Draining the pond to catch the fish or creating harmony between man and nature? Zero-sum game or win-win cooperation? Copying other countries' development model or achieving independent development in light of national conditions? What kind of modernization do we need and how can we achieve it? Confronted with these questions, political parties as an important force steering and driving the modernization process are duty bound to provide answers. Here, I wish to share some of my observations.

We must put the people first and ensure modernization is people-centered. The people are the creators of history and are the strongest bedrock and force in advancing modernization. The ultimate goal of modernization is people's free and well-rounded development. For a modernization path to work and work well, it must put the people first. Modernization is not only about indicators and statistics on the paper but more about the delivery of a happy and stable life for the people. With a focus on the people's aspirations for a better life and further progress of civilization, political parties should strive to achieve material abundance, political integrity, cultural-ethical enrichment, social stability, and pleasant living environments so that modernization will better address the concerns and meet diversified needs of the people. In this way, modernization will promote the sustainable development of humanity by not only increasing the wellbeing of this generation but also protecting the rights and interest of future generations.

We must uphold the principle of independence and explore diversified paths towards modernization. Modernization is not "an exclusive patent" of a small handful of countries, nor is it a single answer question. It cannot be realized by a cookie cutter approach or simple "copy and paste". For any country to achieve modernization, it needs not only to follow the general laws governing the process, but more importantly consider its own national conditions and unique features. It is the people of a country that are in the best position to tell what kind of modernization best suits them. Developing countries have the right and ability to independently explore the modernization path with their distinctive features based on their national realities. We must develop our country and our nation with our own strength, and we must maintain a firm grasp on the future of our country's development and progress. We should respect and support the development paths independently chosen by different peoples to jointly usher in a new prospect for humanity's modernization that is like a garden where a hundred flowers bloom.

We must uphold fundamental principles and break new ground and ensure the continuity of the modernization process. In the face of various new issues, conditions and challenges in the modernization process, political parties should boldly take on responsibilities and excel in their work. We should break the shackles of stale thinking, remove institutional barriers, explore new methods and new approaches, and break new ground

Xi Jinping delivers the keynote address at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting via video link on Wednesday. LIU BIN / XINHUA

The event, with the theme "Path Towards Modernization: the Responsibility of Political Parties," brings together more than 500 leaders of political parties and political organizations from more than 150 countries. YIN BOGU / XINHUA

in theories and practices to instill unceasing dynamism into the modernization process. We should work together to reform and develop the global governance system and make the international order more just and equitable as we advance humanity's modernization in an environment of equal rights, equal opportunities and fair rules for all.

We must help others to succeed while seeking our own success and ensure all can enjoy the outcomes of modernization. Humanity lives in a community with a shared future where we rise and fall together. For any country to achieve modernization, it should pursue common development through solidarity and cooperation and follow the principles of joint contribution, shared benefits and win-win outcome. The frontrunners should sincerely support other countries in their development. One will not be seen in a more favourable light after blowing out others' lamp; nor will they go farther by blocking others' paths. We should share opportunities, create a future together and make the pie of humanity's modernization bigger to ensure more people enjoy the outcomes of modernization in a fairer way. We stand firmly opposed to the practice of preserving one's own development privilege by suppressing and containing other countries' endeavor to achieve modernization.

We must forge ahead with enterprise and ensure firm leadership over modernization. Modernization does not fall into our lap automatically. It is the result of hard work with the strong historical initiative. Political parties are the leading and driving force for modernization. Their values, ability to lead and govern, ethos, willpower and character have a direct bearing on the orientation and future of the modernization process. As an ancient Chinese philosopher said, "He who conquers himself is strong." Political parties should integrate party building with national modernization, forge ahead with enterprise and resolve, and excel themselves. In this way, they will have the confidence, determination and capability to respond to the challenges and questions presented by the times, meet people's expectations, and steer the course and marshal strength for the modernization cause.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Friends,

Achieving modernization is a dream that the Chinese people have strived to fulfill since modern times. The journey of over 100 years that the Party has traversed to unite and lead the Chinese people in pursuing national rejuvenation is also an exploration of a path towards modernization. Thanks to the unremitting efforts of generation after generation, we have found our own path to modernization.

The 20th National Congress of the CPC has proposed advancing the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts through a Chinese path to modernization. Chinese modernization is one of a huge population, of common prosperity for all, of material and cultural-ethical advancement, of harmony between humanity and nature, and of peaceful development. It is rooted in our national conditions and also draws on the experience of other countries. It carries the imprint of history and traditional culture and also contains modern elements. It delivers benefit to the Chinese people and also advances common development of the world. It is a sure path for us to build a stronger nation and realize the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. It is also a path we must take to seek progress for humanity and harmony for the entire world. We will stay committed to the right direction, right theories and the right path. We will not veer off course by changing our nature or abandoning our system. As our own future is closely connected with that of other countries and peoples, we will strive to provide new opportunities for world development, add new impetus to humanity's exploration of paths towards modernization and make new contributions to the theory and practice of humanity's modernization as we make new progress in Chinese modernization.

The CPC will continue to pursue high-quality development and promote global growth and prosperity. We will accelerate the building of a new development paradigm that promotes high-standard opening up and steady expansion of market access. China's door will only open wider. As we further modernize our industrial system, we will provide the world with more and better products made and created in China, and with a Chinese market of a larger scale and stronger demand. We will continue to support and help developing countries in their pursuit of faster development, industrialization and modernization and offer Chinese solutions and strength for narrowing the North-South gap and achieving common development. The CPC stands ready to work with political parties of all other countries to advance high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, accelerate the solid implementation of the Global Development Initiative, foster new drivers for global development and build a global community of development.

The CPC will continue to safeguard international fairness and justice and promote world peace and stability. In advancing modernization, China will neither tread the old path of colonization and plunder, nor the crooked path taken by some countries to seek hegemony once they grow strong. What China pursues is the right course of peaceful development. We seek to settle differences through dialogue and resolve disputes through cooperation. We firmly oppose hegemony and power politics in all their forms. We advocate solidarity and win-win mentality in handling complex and intertwined security challenges to set up a fair and just security architecture that is built and shared by all. The world does not need a new Cold War. The practice of stoking division and confrontation in the name of democracy is in itself a violation of the spirit of democracy. It will not receive any support. What it brings is only endless harm. A modernized China will strengthen the force for world peace and international justice. No matter what level of development China achieves, it will never seek hegemony or expansion.

The CPC will continue to promote inter-civilization exchanges and mutual learning and advance the progress of human civilizations. Around the world, countries and regions have chosen different paths to modernization, which are rooted in their unique and long civilizations. All civilizations created by human society are splendid. They are where each country's modernization drive draws its strength and where its unique feature comes from. They, transcending time and space, have jointly made important contribution to humanity's modernization process. Chinese modernization, as a new form of human advancement, will draw upon the merits of other civilizations and make the garden of world civilizations more vibrant.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Friends,

A single flower does not make spring, while one hundred flowers in full blossom bring spring to the garden. As the future of all countries are closely connected, tolerance, coexistence, exchanges and mutual learning among different civilizations play an irreplaceable role in advancing humanity's modernization process and making the garden of world civilizations flourish. Here, I wish to propose the Global Civilization Initiative.

We advocate the respect for the diversity of civilizations. Countries need to uphold the principles of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations, and let cultural exchanges transcend estrangement, mutual learning transcend clashes, and coexistence transcend feelings of superiority.

We advocate the common values of humanity. Peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom are the common aspirations of all peoples. Countries need to keep an open mind in appreciating the perceptions of values by different civilizations, and refrain from imposing their own values or models on others and from stoking ideological confrontation.

We advocate the importance of inheritance and innovation of civilizations. Countries need to fully harness the relevance of their histories and cultures to the present times, and push for creative transformation and innovative development of their fine traditional cultures.

We advocate robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. Countries need to explore the building of a global network for inter-civilization dialogue and cooperation, enrich the contents of exchanges and expand avenues of cooperation to promote mutual understanding and friendship among people of all countries and jointly advance the progress of human civilizations.

We are ready to work together with the international community to open up a new prospect of enhanced exchanges and understanding among different peoples and better interactions and integration of diversified cultures. Together we can make the garden of world civilizations colorful and vibrant.

The CPC is committed to strengthening exchanges and cooperation with other political parties to pursue the just cause together. We are ready to deepen interactions with political parties and organizations in other countries to expand the convergence of ideas and interests. Let us leverage the strength of a new type of party-to-party relations for the building of a new type of international relations and expand global partnerships by fostering stronger partners with world political parties. The CPC stands ready to share governance experience with political parties and organizations of other countries so that together we can make big strides on the path to modernization toward the goal of building a community with a shared future for mankind.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Friends,

There are bound to be setbacks on humanity's journey to modernization, but the future is bright. The CPC is willing to work with all of you to ensure that different modernization drives form a mighty force driving prosperity and progress of the world and forge ahead nonstop in the long river of history!

Thank you.

COMMENT

Editorials

Global Civilization Initiative outlines the way to transcend estrangement, clashes and superiority

The modernization of humanity should be like a garden where a hundred flowers bloom. This is what President Xi Jinping said in his keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the Communist Party of China in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting via video link on Wednesday.

Xi was referring to the way each country chooses to advance its own modernization. Each country needs not only to follow the general laws governing the process of modernization, but also to take the path that is best suited to its own national conditions and unique features.

It is the people of a country that are in the best position to say what modernization path best suits them, as modernization "does not fall into our laps automatically".

Saying that modernization cannot be realized by "a cookie cutter approach or simple copy and paste", Xi put forward a Global Civilization Initiative that promotes tolerance, coexistence, exchanges and mutual learning for the development of a community with a shared future for humanity.

Following the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative, this is the third initiative China has put forward for global governance.

The latest initiative calls for respect for the diversity of civilizations, advocating the common values of humanity, highly valuing the inheritance and innovation of civilizations, and jointly promoting robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation.

Countries, big or small, strong or weak, should respect the diversity of cultures. Each country has its unique culture, which is the foundation on which its own approach to modernization should be based. Only by respecting the diversity of civilizations will the world have a sound base on which to build lasting peace for the entire world.

And only by respecting the diversity of civilizations will it be possible for exchanges to be conducted among different cultures on an equal basis. It is mandatory for people from different cultures to conduct exchanges in order to constantly update and expand the common values of humanity.

Respecting the diversity of civilizations entails the necessity that no country, no matter how strong it is militarily or economically, should impose its own values or its own ideology onto other countries. Only in this way will it be possible for all countries to strive in unity for lasting global peace.

Yet, at the same time, for each country and each culture, carrying on its own traditional culture does not mean isolation from other cultures as traditional cultures need to be updated with new content to keep abreast of the times. Exchanges between different cultures are necessary to do that.

The Global Civilization Initiative is meant to motivate political parties and organizations all over the world to do their bit in promoting interactions among themselves, and thereafter promoting cultural exchanges between different civilizations. In this way, they will be able to contribute to the promotion of world peace and the building of a community with a shared future for humanity.

Washington's barefaced theft of TikTok

The Committee on Foreign Investment, part of the US Treasury Department, has reportedly threatened to ban TikTok in the United States, unless its owner, Beijing-based ByteDance, divests itself of the popular video-sharing app.

TikTok's response to that intimidation on Wednesday serves to expose the nature of the threat as nothing but barefaced robbery.

"If protecting national security is the objective, divestment doesn't solve the problem: a change in ownership would not impose any new restrictions on data flows or access," TikTok spokesperson Maureen Shanahan said. "The best way to address concerns about national security is with the transparent, US-based protection of US user data and systems, with robust third-party monitoring, vetting, and verification, which we are already implementing."

Despite having TikTok in its sights for more than three years, the US side has not yet been able to provide any substantial evidence to prove the app is a security risk.

Nevertheless, late last month, the White House gave all federal agencies 30 days to wipe TikTok off all government devices, which is what the Office of Management and Budget called a "critical step forward in addressing the risks presented by the app to sensitive government data".

That followed after Congress passed the "No TikTok on Government Devices Act" in December as part of a sweeping government funding package, although the legislation does allow for the use of TikTok in certain cases, including for national security, law enforcement and research purposes.

Mike McCaul, chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, who has been a vocal critic of the app, has even likened it to "a spy balloon" that China was sending to the phones of US users. Which is simply a crooked smear based on the artificially fabricated "Chinese spy balloon" threat that gripped the US recently.

It is the relentless eavesdropping of the US government, carried out with the complicity of big US internet companies, that has created an atmosphere favorable for the spread of such crazy and hysterical views.

That both the Treasury Department and the White House's National Security Council have declined to comment on the company's to-the-point response further belies the hollowness of the "national security" concerns, which is only an excuse for the Joe Biden administration to weaponize the concept in order to disguise the egregious nature of its smash-and-grab raid of leading foreign companies.

It is predictable that the House of Representatives and Senate will continue to press ahead with relevant legislation to give the Biden administration more power to clamp down on TikTok until it is controlled by the US. Then Washington will no doubt turn its sights on another company.

AUKUS deal worst thing in every way for Australia

At a National Press Club event on Wednesday, former Australian prime minister Paul Keating derided the AUKUS submarine deal as being "irrational in every dimension".

Saying that the deal meant Australia was suborning its sovereignty "to the whim and caprice" of US administrations, Keating was scathing in his criticism. He has struck the nail on the head as the deal damages Australian interests any which way you look at it.

The latest data from Australian consulting firm Adroit estimates the cost of the AUKUS program will be 368 billion Australian dollars ($244.32 billion) — and you can bet your bottom dollar, it will run over budget — which will be paid by Australian citizens who will effectively be subsidizing the design of the next UK attack class Astute submarine "simply to be able to grab half a dozen for ourselves on the way through" even though "they will be of little military benefit to anybody, even to the Americans".

But it is a sizeable windfall that will be welcomed by the defense companies of the two transatlantic powers. The cost to Australia however is "off the scale". Directed by the US, AUKUS takes China as an imaginary enemy. The deal will inevitably worsen relations between Australia and its largest trading partner.

On Feb 8, the first Australian coal-carrying ship in two years arrived at Zhanjiang port, Guangdong province, after the two sides made concerted efforts to repair their relations following the damage done to them by the previous Australian administration. But with Australia taking further steps on a "dangerous and unnecessary journey" those efforts to mend ties are in jeopardy.

As Keating warned, no "softer or polite language" can disguise Australia's commitment to rattling a sword in the neighborhood on behalf of the US to impress upon the region "the US' esteemed view of its untrammeled destiny". In doing so it is arraigning itself with an Atlantic power "which upon any defeat or setback will see that power likely repair ten thousand kilometers across the moat of the Pacific, as it retreated from Iraq and Afghanistan", leaving the scarred locals to pick up the pieces.

Australia is also damaging its own credibility by exploiting a loophole in the nuclear non-proliferation mechanism, which grants nuclear fission materials exemption from the International Atomic Energy Agency monitoring if they are used for non-explosive military use. The AUKUS deal will set a bad precedent by transferring nuclear technologies to a non-nuclear nation.

So the AUKUS submarine deal is damaging as well as costly for Australia whichever way you look at it, and as such, the Anthony Albanese government should take time to reconsider it.

CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

Contact us at:

China Daily
15 Huixin Dongjie Chaoyang District, Beijing 100029
News: +86 (0) 10 6491-8366
editor@chinadaily.com.cn
Advertisement: +86 (0) 10 6491-8631
ads@chinadaily.com.cn
Subscription: +86-400-699-0203
subscription.chinadaily.com.cn
App: www.chinadaily.com.cn/mobile/daily.html

China Daily UK
90 Cannon St, London EC4N 6HA, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

China Daily Asia Pacific
China Daily Hong Kong
Unit 1818, Hing Wai Centre, 7 Tin Wan Praya Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong
+852 2518 5111
editor@chinadailyhk.com
editor@chinadailyasia.com

China Daily USA
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailyusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254(0)20 242 8589 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

Luo Jie

Opinion Line

SVB collapse just one of many, as challenges abound for US

The financial turmoil triggered by the Silicon Valley Bank's collapse is putting the US Federal Reserve in a dilemma and posing a huge systematic challenge for the US economy.

Since the subprime mortgage crisis in 2007, the United States has been relying on quantitative easing to maintain economic growth, acclimatizing the market to a low interest rate environment.

However, the pandemic has motivated the Fed to launch a larger scale of quantitative easing, causing more money to flow into less-regulated asset management, private equity and hedge funds, thus creating asset bubbles and spurring the blind expansion of technology and traditional companies. In the face of "unexpected inflation", the Fed had to aggressively raise interest rates.

However, the Fed is trying to strike a balance between reducing inflation, promoting growth, ensuring employment and maintaining financial stability, a near-impossible task. Taming inflation means the Fed can no longer provide unlimited cheap liquidity support, but this would make the financial market buoyed by cheap liquidity more vulnerable.

The SVB's failure means the loose monetary policy cycle of the US in the past decade has come to an end, given that the policy supposed to curb inflation not only hinders growth, but also adds to the instability of the financial system.

Despite a long-time loose monetary policy, the US has maintained a low level of inflation for more than two decades because of the globalization it promoted. However, in the past few years, the US has been pushing for de-globalization. The sanctions imposed on Russian energy after the Ukraine crisis has pushed global energy prices higher. The US is also pushing for decoupling from China and restructuring the global industry chain, undermining the foundation of US enterprises and adding uncertainties to prices.

Globalization has cemented the US dollar's international position, but its energy self-sufficiency and supply chain adjustment will weaken the dollar's position in energy and trade. The use of the dollar as a weapon to attack other countries after the Russia-Ukraine conflict has also increased international concerns and prompted some countries to bypass the "dollar trap". The ballooning US government debt and its unstable financial system will continue to weaken international confidence in the dollar-dominated system.

The fragile financial system and an unstable international environment the US has created are smashing market confidence in the US' economic prospects.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

Creating an anti-China stage for survival

South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem of the Republican Party told Fox News on Monday that "China has a 2,000-year plan to destroy this country".

Ever since, the quote has gone viral and many people have been giving the governor lessons in history. Some have written under the comments section of platforms where the news was shared that 2,000 years ago, China was ruled by the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24), the Roman Empire was still around, but neither of them had any idea about the existence of the United States of America as Christopher Columbus or Amerigo Vespucci had still not discovered the Americas. It was not until 15 centuries later when European sailors reached American shores, and two centuries more before they founded the US after slaughtering the indigenous people and robbing their lands.

Even if Governor Noem is ignorant about world history, with a degree from South Dakota University she should at least know that her country didn't even exist 247 years ago. So who was China planning to destroy for 2,000 years?

More absurd than her observation is the fact that the voters elected her governor to serve them despite her level of ignorance. Her saying in the same interview that South Dakota will be in the front line against China shows she is a China-hater and that's essentially how she got elected, by first turning people against China and then cashing in.

That's a problem with politics in the US. People there get elected not because of their abilities, but because of their anti-China standing.

By hyping up the "China threat theory" and creating an imaginary enemy, politicians in the US have not only ruined bilateral relations but also created a theater where only China-bashers can survive.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Practical promoter of peace in Middle East

The surprise announcement by Iran and Saudi Arabia that they had agreed to resume diplomatic relations after talks sponsored by China in Beijing last week has attracted attention to China's Special Envoy to the Middle East Zhai Jun's ongoing efforts shuttling between Palestine and Israel to facilitate a solution for issues between the two sides.

The rapprochement that Beijing has helped to broker between Teheran and Riyadh has lent his otherwise normal diplomatic efforts specific and pragmatic relevance.

In recent years, China has not only proposed a five-point initiative for achieving security and stability in the Middle East, a four-point proposal for the political settlement of the Syrian issue, and a three-point vision for the implementation of the two-state solution to the Palestinian question, but has also matched its words with deeds.

Given the sensitivity of these issues, many of China's pro-peace efforts to resolve them are understandably not suited to be publicized before concrete outcomes are confirmed, in a bid to create convenience and space for exchanges between disputing parties, and also to prevent some external powers from sabotaging the reconciliation process for their own narrow ends.

After World War II, due to its rich oil resources and strategic geopolitical significance, the Middle East has been made an arena for big power struggles, a root cause of the sufferings of local people and why the region still largely relies on oil money for development.

The end of the Iraq war in 2011 marked the beginning of the United States' withdrawal from the country as well as an overall diversion of its attention from the Middle East to the "Indo-Pacific". It left a mess behind, which Washington brazenly calls a "strategic vacuum" which it claims Beijing always casts a covetous eye at.

Yet, the robust development of China's relations with almost all countries in the region over the past decade, along with the tangible benefits local people have reaped from that, exposes the fallacy of the US' claim. China has proved itself to be a reliable partner and promoter of common development. Acting as another US-style manipulator to play one country against the other is not China's way.

That's why Special Envoy Zhai's ongoing endeavors are widely welcomed by the whole region, and China's mediation is highly appreciated by all stakeholders.

Dialogue and consultation among countries in the region aimed at solving their disputes should be supported. It is to be hoped that other influential non-regional countries can work together with China to contribute to the political settlement of their differences.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

DOCUMENT

China's Law-Based Cyberspace Governance in the New Era

The State Council Information Office of
the People's Republic of China
March 2023

Editor's Note: *China's State Council Information Office on Thursday released a white paper titled "China's Law-Based Cyberspace Governance in the New Era." Full text follows:*

Contents

Preface
I. Upholding the Rule of Law in Cyberspace
II. Consolidating the Legal System for Cyberspace Governance
III. Keeping Order in a Rule-Based Cyberspace
IV. Defending Fairness and Justice in Cyberspace
V. Promoting Public Awareness and Competence in Law-Based Cyberspace Governance
VI. Increasing International Exchanges and Cooperation in Law-Based Cyberspace Governance
Conclusion

Preface

The internet is one of humanity's great achievements. Although it facilitates economic and social development, at the same time it poses severe challenges in terms of administration and governance. The development and governance of the internet is a goal shared by all countries for the benefit of humanity, and the rule of law has proved to be essential to internet governance. It has become a global consensus to apply law-based thinking and approaches based on an understanding of the rule of law.

Since China was fully connected to the internet in 1994, it has committed itself to law-based cyberspace governance, ensuring that the internet develops within the confines of the law. In the new era, guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, China has made law-based cyberspace governance an essential part of the overall strategy of the rule of law and the drive to build up its strength in cyberspace.

Marked improvements have been made in ensuring law-based cyberspace governance. China has boosted cyberspace governance by developing a complete system of laws and regulations, a highly efficient enforcement system, a stringent supervision system, and an effective supporting system. With participation of the government, businesses, social organizations and netizens, cyber legislation, law enforcement, and judiciary work have advanced alongside programs to spread legal knowledge via the internet, publicize cyber laws and cultivate the public's awareness in laws. This is a pioneering approach to cyberspace governance in line with international best practices. With stronger domestic capacity in law-based internet governance, China has contributed ideas and solutions to global internet governance.

The Chinese government is publishing this white paper to introduce China's progress and experience in law-based cyberspace governance.

I. Upholding the Rule of Law in Cyberspace

Adapting to the developing trends of global information technology, China set out from its own realities to integrate law-based cyberspace governance into the overall national strategy of the rule of law, gaining knowledge and experience in the process. It has pioneered a distinctive Chinese approach to law-based cyberspace governance.

– People-centered development. In China, the people contribute ideas and solutions and play a principal role. Their rights, interests, aspirations and wellbeing are the focus in every aspect of cyber legislation, law enforcement, judiciary work, public education, and all other areas of law-based cyberspace governance. China protects people's legitimate rights and interests in cyberspace, and fully respects netizens' right to express ideas and exchange views. It has strengthened law-based cyberspace governance, taking resolute action against cybercrimes to keep order in this virtual world, and striving to create a safe, fair, healthy, clean and sound cyber environment.

– Further development of the internet. The purpose of law-based cyberspace governance is to guarantee the healthy and orderly development of the internet, not to hold it back. Under law-based cyberspace governance, China has guided and regulated efforts to build a high-quality digital China – improving the governance system for the digital economy, the legal framework of digital government, and the digital society initiative. Placing equal emphasis on development and security, China has consolidated its lines of defense so that the internet grows in a secure environment and further boosts cybersecurity. Cyberspace has thus been turned into a powerful engine for socioeconomic growth, rather than an area of uncertainty.

– Proceeding from realities. China is the world's largest developing country and has the largest number of internet users. It boasts a large number of business platforms that offer all types of products and services. As a result, there are diverse legal subjects, relationships and situations where different laws apply. With all this in mind, China handles the relationships between development and security, freedom and order, openness and autonomy, and administration and service in an appropriate manner. It has conducted in-depth research on frontier areas of overbearing importance, employing law-based thinking and approaches to break through bottlenecks in internet development and find solutions for healthy internet growth.

– Innovation-driven cyberspace governance. The internet is a result of innovation and has flourished because of it. Law-based cyberspace governance cannot be achieved without innovation. With a keen understanding of the unprecedented difficulties and complications in cyberspace governance, China has been forward-looking in responding to the risks and challenges brought by new internet technologies, applications, and business forms and models, and promoted innovation in the concept, content, approach and methods of law-based cyberspace governance. By creating and improving rules on algorithm, blockchain technology, and other new technologies and domains, it has filled gaps in key areas where legislation once lagged behind. A system for comprehensive cyberspace governance is now in place, and new models of cyber judiciary work have been created. Driven by innovation, China has raised its capacity for internet governance in all areas.

– Openness and cooperation. Upholding cyber sovereignty, China has drawn from the experience of other countries in cyberspace governance, planning internet development in a global context and pioneering a distinctively Chinese model of internet governance in line with international best practice. It has played an active part in working with other countries to formulate rules for cyberspace governance, and engaged in international exchanges and cooperation in law-based cyberspace governance. It is committed to building a multilateral, democratic and transparent global internet governance system together with other countries.

In the new era, China set out from its realities and learned from advanced foreign experience to explore its own approach to cyberspace regulation and governance, maintaining the right orientation while pursuing innovation. Significant achievements have been made in a range of areas, building up China's strength in cyberspace and adding momentum to law-based governance of the country, as well as contributing to national governance by the CPC in the information age.

– A guarantee of the transformation from scale to strength. China is building up its strength in cyberspace through these goals: universally available network infrastructure, significantly greater capacity of independent innovation, comprehensive development of the digital economy, guarantee of cybersecurity, and balanced ability of cyber attacks and defense. Major progress has been made in China towards these goals, as evidenced by the world's largest number of netizens, the largest and most advanced fiber-optic broadband and mobile telecommunication networks, and world-leading 5G technology, industry and applications. China's Internet of Things (IoT) now connects more cellular terminals than mobile phone users.

China's digital economy has been growing with a strong momentum. In 2021, its value reached RMB45.5 trillion, ranking second in the world. New internet technologies are widely used in areas such as education, employment, social security, medical and health care, sports, housing, transport, support for persons with disabilities, and elderly care. Internet Plus services are running on a track of healthy development in accordance with the law. China has created the world's largest active digital society.

– Law-based national governance fully implemented in cyberspace. In China, the principle of law-based governance of the country applies equally in cyberspace. The Law-based Governance of China Initiative has been implemented, and progress has been made in law-based cyberspace governance by ensuring sound lawmaking, strict enforcement, impartial administration of justice, and the observance of the law by all. Under socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics in cyberspace, the groundwork for cyber legislation has been laid, contributing to and improving China's socialist legal system. Cyber law enforcement has continued to strengthen. By taking tough action against illegal behaviors in cyberspace, China has fostered a sound cyber environment and maintained online order, which contributes to peace and harmony in the society as a whole. Rules of cyber adjudication have improved, more online cases have been handled, and justice is served in cyberspace as elsewhere. Knowledge of cyber laws has been further spread, and netizens have acted accordingly – respecting, learning, abiding by, and using the law. The Chinese people's awareness of and literacy in the law has increased.

– Contributing ideas, experience and solutions to global internet governance. Cyberspace is a shared space for human activities; it must be developed and managed by all countries. China has formed its own approach to law-based cyberspace governance by advancing legislation, law enforcement, judiciary work, and programs to spread knowledge about cyber laws, and has shared its experience with the world. It has taken an active part in global internet governance, promoting the G20 Digital Economy Development and Cooperation Initiative and the Global Data Security Initiative, and other proposals and declarations. It raised the principle of cyber sovereignty, and advocates that the principle of sovereign equality established by the UN Charter be applied to cyberspace, thereby contributing ideas and solutions to cyberspace governance.

II. Consolidating the Legal System for Cyberspace Governance

The law is a powerful tool for governing a country, and sound laws are the prerequisite for good governance. Following the trend of internet development, China has advanced the legal system for cyberspace governance through legislation that is enacted in a well-conceived and democratic way and in accordance with the law. Cyber legislation is becoming systematic, holistic, coordinated, and time-efficient.

Cyber legislation in China has undergone a long, gradual process that can be roughly divided into three stages. The first stage ran from 1994 to 1999, a period when China became connected to the internet. Internet users and devices grew steadily in number. Legislation during this stage focused on network infrastructure security, specifically computer systems security and network security. The second stage lasted from 2000 to 2011, when personal computers (PC) served as the main terminal for internet connection. As PCs and internet users grew rapidly in numbers, internet connection services became more affordable and web-based information services boomed. Legislation during this stage shifted to internet services and content management. The third stage, which began in 2012, is dominated by mobile internet. Legislation now is gradually focusing on comprehensive cyberspace governance by covering areas such as network information services, information technology development, and cybersecurity.

Over the years, China has promulgated more than 140 laws on cyberspace, forming a cyber legislation framework with the Constitution as the foundation, supported by laws, administrative regulations, departmental rules, local regulations and local administrative rules, endorsed by traditional legislation, and underpinned by specialized cyber laws governing online content and management, cybersecurity, information technology, and other elements. This system of laws on cyberspace governance provides a strong institutional guarantee for building up China's strength in cyberspace.

Panel 1 Cyber Legislation in China

Law
• Electronic Commerce Law
• Electronic Signature Law
• Cybersecurity Law
• Data Security Law
• Personal Information Protection Law
• Law on Combating Telecom and Online Fraud

Administrative Regulation
• Regulations on the Security and Protection of Computer Information Systems
• Regulations on Computer Software Protection
• Administrative Measures on Internet Information Services
• Telecommunications Regulations
• Regulations on the Administration of Foreign Investment in Chinese Telecommunications Businesses
• Regulations on the Protection of the Right of Communication Through Information Networks
• Regulations on the Security and Protection of Critical Information Infrastructure

Departmental Rule
• Regulations on the Protection of Children's Online Personal Information
• China Internet Domain Name Regulations
• Measures on the Supervision and Administration of Online Transactions
• Provisions on the Administration of Internet News and Information Services
• Regulations on the Governance of Online Information and Content
• Regulations on the Management of Algorithmic Recommendations for Internet Information Services

Local Regulation
• Guangdong Provincial Digital Economy Promotion Act
• Zhejiang Provincial Digital Economy Promotion Act
• Hebei Provincial Regulations on Information Technology Development
• Guizhou Provincial Regulations on Government Data Sharing
• Shanghai Municipal Data Regulations

Local Administrative Rule
• Measures of Guangdong Province on Public Data Management
• Measures of Anhui Province on the Management of Data and Resources for Government Affairs
• Measures of Jiangxi Province on the Protection of Computer Information System Security
• Interim Measures of Hangzhou City on the Administration of Online Transactions

Total Number
Exceeding 140

1. Establishing a System of Laws for Protecting People's Rights and Interests in Cyberspace

China has established a sound system of laws to protect people's rights and interests in cyberspace, laying the legal groundwork for protecting both online and offline rights.

– Protecting the freedom and confidentiality of correspondence. This is a prerequisite for citizens to air views and needs in cyberspace of their own volition. China enacted the Measures on Ensuring Security of Internationally Connected Computer Information Networks in 1997, to provide legal protection of the freedom and confidentiality of correspondence as enshrined in the Constitution. It formulated the Telecommunications Regulations in 2000, stipulating that citizens' freedom to use telecom services and their confidentiality of correspondence are protected by law. It revised the Regulations on Radio Administration in 2016, further strengthening the protection of the confidentiality of correspondence via radio service. Thus, this basic right enjoys full protection in cyberspace.

– Protecting personal information rights and interests. China has built a line of defense in law for protecting personal information rights and interests. In 2020, the Civil Code was adopted at the Third Session of the 13th National People's Congress, which makes systemic provisions on protecting personal information in civil cases based on previous legal stipulations. In 2009 and 2015, Amendment VII and Amendment IX to the Criminal Law added provisions on the crime of infringing upon citizens' personal information, thus strengthening the protection of personal information in the Criminal Law. In terms of cyber legislation, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress issued the Decision on Strengthening Online Information Protection in 2012, announcing clearly to protect electronic information that may reveal citizen's identity and privacy. The Cybersecurity Law enacted in 2016 further refined rules on personal information protection.

The Personal Information Protection Law, promulgated in 2021, represented an overall upgrading of personal information protection. It defined and refined principles on protecting personal information and rules on processing personal information, and specified how state agencies should process personal information in accordance with the law. It empowered the subjects of personal information with a range of rights, emphasized the obligations of personal information processors, improved the mechanism for protecting personal information, and set clear and strict legal liabilities.

– Safeguarding citizen's property. China has strengthened legislation to curb infringements upon citizens' property by way of the internet. In 2018, the Electronic Commerce Law was promulgated, stipulating that products or services from e-commerce suppliers should not undermine personal safety or the security of property. The Civil Code has clear provisions on the legal liability of those who infringe upon others' property rights and interests by way of the internet. In 2022, China enacted the Law on Combating Telecom and Online Fraud, providing strong legal support for fighting crime and safeguarding people's property rights and interests.

– Protecting the digital rights of special groups. Through multilevel and multifaceted legislation, China has invested a real effort to close the digital divide for minors, elderly people, and persons with disabilities, so that everybody can join in the digital society on an equal basis and enjoy the benefits of the digital age as much as possible.

As stipulated in the Cybersecurity Law, the state supports research and development on internet products and services that are beneficial to minors' healthy growth, and punishes by law those who place their physical and mental health at risk via the internet. In 2019, China issued the Regulations on the Protection of Children's Online Personal Information, prioritizing the protection of personal information for children. In 2020, the Law on the Protection of Minors was revised, to strengthen minors' education on internet literacy, online supervision and regulation of content for minors, protection of minors' personal information online, and prevention and control of internet addiction, all to safeguard minors' legitimate rights and interests in cyberspace. The Data Security Law, promulgated in 2021, stipulates that providers of smart public services should take into full consideration the needs of elderly people and persons with disabilities, and make sure they do not create obstacles to their daily life.

2. Improving Law-Based Governance of the Digital Economy

To transform from high-speed growth to high-quality growth, China has continued to improve institutions fundamental to data development, maintain order in the digital market, and regulate new business forms and models of the digital economy, laying a sound framework of rules for the healthy growth of the digital economy.

– Creating institutions fundamental to data development. Data is a fundamental resource and an engine for innovation. The Data Security Law contains provisions on implementing the big data strategy, supporting R&D on data-related technology and business innovation, advancing data-related standards, and developing data trading markets. These provisions aim to improve data development and utilization, and promote the growth of the digital economy in which data serves as a key factor.

– Regulating the operation of the digital market. China regulates and develops the digital market in accordance with the law, stands firmly against monopolies and unfair competition, and improves digital rules to ensure a market environment for fair competition.

The Electronic Commerce Law provides a full set of regulations on e-commerce operation, with clear provisions on the responsibilities of e-commerce platform operators and business owners on these platforms. It stipulates that e-commerce operators with a dominant share of the market should not abuse their position to eliminate or limit competition, so that fair competition is maintained. The Law on the Protection of Consumer Rights and Interests (2013 Revision) established a seven-day unconditional return policy for online shopping, to reinforce the primary responsibility of online business operators in consumer rights protection. The Law Against Unfair Competition (2017 Revision) has separate provisions regarding the internet, to ban unfair competition that takes advantage of technology. The Measures on the Supervision and Administration of Online Transactions, enacted in 2021, contain detailed provisions on the relevant regulations in the Electronic Commerce Law, to strengthen online trading supervision. In 2021, the Anti-monopoly Commission under the State Council issued the Anti-monopoly Guidelines for Platform Economy, to strengthen and improve anti-monopoly supervision based on the status, characteristics, and development of the platform economy. In 2022, the Anti-monopoly Law was amended to improve the anti-monopoly framework for the platform economy, banning operators from abuse of a monopoly position by leveraging their strengths in data and algorithms, technology, capital, and platform rules.

See page 10

DOCUMENT

From page 9

– Regulating new business forms and models of the digital economy. The rapid rise of new business forms and models in the digital economy created social and economic impetus and potential, and also posed new challenges for social governance and industrial growth. Focusing on problems unique to the new forms and models in certain areas, China has advanced legislation in both the comprehensive and special laws to prevent and defuse risks.

The Civil Code improved the rules on the conclusion and execution of electronic contracts, and brought data and virtual assets under legal protection, giving a boost to the digital economy. To expand the legal framework for governing Internet Plus services, China has introduced an array of regulations, including the Interim Measures on the Administration of Online Taxi Booking Services, Regulations on the Administration of Algorithmic Recommendations for Internet Information Services, Regulations on the Administration of Blockchain Information Services, Interim Measures on the Administration of Business Activities of Intermediary Agencies for Online Lending, and Interim Regulations on the Administration of Online Tourist Services.

3. Safeguarding Cybersecurity by Law

Cybersecurity is a new component of national security, and an issue of paramount importance. By formulating the National Security Law, Cybersecurity Law, and Data Security Law, China has defined the legal institutional framework for cybersecurity, to boost its defenses against cyber threats and effectively respond to cybersecurity risks.

– Setting rules for cybersecurity. The Regulations on the Security and Protection of Computer Information Systems was released in 1994, designed to safeguard and supervise computer information system security. In 2000, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress issued the Decision on Ensuring Internet Security, detailing security requirements in operation and information, and establishing a framework of responsibilities for cybersecurity composed of civil, administrative and criminal liabilities.

The Cybersecurity Law specifies the systems for ensuring security of network operation, online products and services, data, and information. Some of its provisions are further elaborated in the Measures on Cybersecurity Review and the Regulations on the Management of Security Loopholes of Online Products. After years of effort, China now has a complete set of legal rules on cybersecurity, and greater capacity for ensuring cybersecurity through institutional development.

– Ensuring security for critical information infrastructure. Critical information infrastructure is the nerve center of socioeconomic operation, and the top concern for cybersecurity. Its security is central to maintaining cyber sovereignty and national security, guaranteeing sound socioeconomic development, and protecting the public interest and the legitimate rights and interests of individual citizens.

In 2021, China released the Regulations on the Security and Protection of Critical Information Infrastructure, with provisions defining what constitutes critical information infrastructure and the principles and goals of protection. The procedures for identifying critical information infrastructure were improved, and the operators' responsibility for cybersecurity was clarified. There were also provisions on improving the mechanisms for network security and protection, setting up special security management agencies, conducting safety monitoring and risk assessment, and regulating the purchase of online products and services. The Regulations provide the legal ground for upgrading the country's capacity for safeguarding critical information infrastructure.

– Developing the legal framework for data security management. Proceeding from reality and focusing on the outstanding problems in data security, China has strengthened its capacity for data security through legislation. The Data Security Law has clear provisions on establishing mechanisms for categorized and classified data protection, risk monitoring and early warning, emergency response, and data security review; it also contains measures to facilitate data security and development and provisions for the security and openness of government data.

4. Improving Regulation for a Sound Cyber Environment

Cyberspace is a public space for internet users. A clean and sound cyber environment is in accord with the people's expectations. Out of a strong sense of responsibility towards society and the people, China has introduced laws and regulations for comprehensive cyberspace governance, to clean up the cyber environment with a focus on online information and content.

– Regulating the orderly dissemination of online information. To strengthen online information governance, a global challenge, China formulated the Civil Code, Cybersecurity Law, and Administrative Measures on Internet Information Services, to define the rules for the dissemination of online information and the liabilities of relevant subjects. These laid the legal groundwork for tackling illegal information that threatens national security, harms the public interest, and infringes upon the legitimate rights and interests of individuals.

– Sharpening the legal weapons against cyberterrorism. China stands firm against the threat of cyberterrorism. The Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure Law, and Anti-Money Laundering Law contain provisions on criminal liability for terrorist activities and judicial proceedings in the investigation of terrorist crimes, as well as on monitoring the money for funding terrorist activities. The Counterterrorism Law promulgated in 2015 has separate provisions on the targets, measures and mechanisms for combating terrorism in cyberspace.

III. Keeping Order in a Rule-Based Cyberspace

Strict law enforcement is a critical link in law-based cyberspace governance. China has taken rigorous measures to ensure fair and rule-based law enforcement in cyberspace, strengthening enforcement in key areas of immediate concern to the people, and protecting the legitimate rights and interests of the individual as well as the general public. A sound, rule-based order has been created in a clean cyber environment.

1. Protecting Personal Information

With a thriving digital economy come a growing number of crimes, such as the illegal collection, buying and selling, use and leakage of personal information, which threaten people's personal and property security and disrupt social and economic order. Personal information protection concerns people's legitimate rights and interests, as well as public security governance and the future of the digital economy.

Targeting covert, high-frequency personal information infringements with high-tech means, China has adopted new thinking and methods of supervision, taking tougher action against illegal activities. For example, it carries out regular actions against mobile applications that illegally collect and use personal data. Since 2019, the authorities in China have inspected 3.22 million mobile applications, issuing notice of criticism to or removing about 3,000 applications that violated laws and regulations. Through these targeted actions, violations of personal information rights have been effectively curbed, as many more applications are now conforming to relevant regulations and the public has also built a strong awareness of personal data protection. Respecting and protecting personal information is recognized as essential by all.

2. Protecting Online Intellectual Property Rights

Strengthening online intellectual property rights (IPR) protection is central to innovation in internet technology. As new technologies and applications flourish, IPR infringements online have become cheaper and more diversified and covert, posing a severe challenge to law enforcement in terms of tracing, evidence collection, and enforcement.

Over the years, China has developed a keen understanding of online IPR creation, protection and application, and taken strong actions for online IPR protection. These include: establishing and improving supervision mechanisms, creating a new dynamic of IPR protection by all members of society, launching cross-platform cooperation for IPR protection, and punishing online infringement and piracy. Integrated online-offline law enforcement has been strengthened to enable firm action against online trademark infringements and counterfeiting of patented products. Regular targeted actions have been taken against all types of infringements and piracy, including online copyright infringement, pirated film copies and illegal dissemination, and copyright infringement in key markets and areas. During the Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympics, more than 110,000 unauthorized links containing content about the Games were deleted from internet platforms. Through years of effort, China has achieved a marked improvement in online IPR protection.

3. Maintaining Order in the Online Market

The rapid rise of the online market has played a major role in stabilizing the economy, spurring consumption, securing employment, and serving the people's wellbeing. China has tried out new models of law enforcement adapted to the online market, a new business form, and supported its sound and sustainable growth by regulating the market for fair competition and taking resolute action against all forms of illegal transactions.

– Ensuring fair competition in the online market. As online platforms expand in size and grow in strength, they have increasingly hampered fair competition by acquiring the best-performing startups in their sectors, deliberately blocking URL links of other platforms, compelling platform users to choose one platform over another, engaging in big data-enabled price discrimination against existing customers, and hijacking traffic.

In response to public appeal, China has taken a range of measures to address disorderly competition among online platforms, support their innovation-driven growth, and regulate and guide capital growth by law. Acts of unfair competition by major online platforms such as price cheating and dumping, monopoly abuse, and other acts of unfair competition have been redressed through regulatory means including administrative admonition, administrative guidance, and guidance on rules. Cases relating to concentration of platform operators in key areas such as finance, high-tech, media that affect people's wellbeing have been reviewed and handled in accordance with the law. Mergers and acquisitions that might adversely affect market competition and innovation have been prevented, and online platform businesses are advised to increase their awareness of rules and regulate their operations.

All this has contributed to an improved market environment for the platform economy, a sound business environment of fair competition, and broader space for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to grow. A unified, open, fair, competitive, and orderly online business environment is taking shape.

Panel 2 Cases of Unfair Competition and Monopoly Involving Online Platforms

In 2020-21, China investigated two typical cases of compelling platform users to choose one platform over another, in e-business and online food delivery services, and imposed total fines of RMB21.67 billion. In 2021, 1,998 cases of unfair competition online were investigated, resulting in fines of RMB119 million. From 2020 to the first half of 2022, 56 cases of concentration of platform operators with prior notification were reviewed, and 159 cases of illegal concentration of platform operators that failed to file a prior notification were investigated in accordance with the law.

– Regulating online trading and transactions. Rule-based online trading and transactions are essential to creating a sound online market environment and protecting the rights of those engaged in these activities.

China has launched Operation Wangjian to fight online sales of pirated, counterfeit, and sub-standard products, and illegal trading of wildlife and products. It has made sure that online platforms assume their due responsibilities, and strengthened supervision over internet advertisement. In response to new online trading forms such as livestreaming e-commerce and mini online stores, China has exercised strict regulation over customer soliciting by online channels, and investigated a number of websites and platform users suspected of wrongdoing. Targeted actions have been taken against online pyramid selling, particularly under the disguise of e-commerce, investment and money management, and online business startups. Online trading and transactions by main market players in key areas have thus been effectively regulated.

Panel 3 Operation Wangjian

Since 2018, China has launched Operation Wangjian (meaning "web sword") to fight online sales of pirated, counterfeit and sub-standard products, illegal trading of wildlife and products, and illegal advertising. About 1.83 million items of illegal product information have been deleted from online trading platforms, 23,900 websites have been closed, 105,000 website and platform services have been served with cessation orders, and 119,700 internet-related cases have been handled. The operation has safeguarded the legitimate rights and interests of consumers and ensured a sound online trading order for fair competition.

4. Safeguarding National Cybersecurity

A strong line of defense against cyber threats is the precondition and basis for the healthy development of the internet. China has continued to carry out law enforcement in securing core internet resources, key network systems, and internet data, effectively preventing and defusing risks to cybersecurity, and creating a safe online environment in the internet age.

In the area of core internet resources, it has strengthened the management of websites, domains and IP addresses, and improved early warning systems through more sophisticated technical means to guarantee security. In the area of key network systems, it has further strengthened protection for network security and monitored cybersecurity threats, effectively guarding against large-scale denial-of-service attacks and other major security incidents. In the area of internet data, through monitoring systems and category-specific management at all levels, it has increased the ability to protect and oversee data security, and strengthened law enforcement on data security involving the Industrial Internet, Internet of Vehicles, and 5G application.

5. Creating a Clean Cyberspace

In response to public demand and expectations, China has acted to regulate online information dissemination and rectify disorder in cyberspace. It has launched Operation Clean Net, Operation Qinglang and other special campaigns to address outstanding problems of strong public concern on the internet, such as pornography, fake information, cyberbullying, and abuse of algorithms. Websites and platforms spreading information that violates laws and regulations have received administrative admonition, rectification orders and warnings, and punishments such as fines and temporary bans on issuing new content. In addition, websites and platforms have been urged to assume their principal responsibility, and manage the information released by their users in accordance with the law and their user agreements. A complaint and reporting system for online information security is now in place to form synergy for cyber governance. With continued improvements to the online environment, the internet has become much cleaner and netizens more civil and better-behaved.

China prioritizes special protection for minors, creating a sound, friendly online environment for them. It has cleaned up the internet through Operation Child Protector and other special programs to maintain a safe online environment for minors, with a focus on illegal and harmful information, online gaming addiction, and unhealthy online socializing. It has strengthened the education on online safety among minors, and punished online crimes that harm the physical and mental health of minors, creating a sound and safe online environment for minors supported by joint efforts from families, schools, and society.

Panel 4 Operation Child Protector

Since 2011, China has regularly launched Operation Child Protector for the protection of minors. Offline, law enforcement teams have conducted regular inspections of markets near campuses, removing publications for children that contain content involving porn, violence or drug-abuse, or promote cult organizations and superstitions. Online, luring yet harmful content has been cleaned up through concerted efforts. Online platforms are urged to introduce youth-friendly versions that work, and key internet businesses are encouraged to assign offices and staff for Operation Child Protector. The Operation has expanded into a franchise of programs, to provide public education and communication, build education bases, and help schools and families strictly supervise teenagers' use of mobile phones and other smart terminal devices.

IV. Defending Fairness and Justice in Cyberspace

An impartial judiciary is the last line of defense for social fairness and justice. China has stayed committed to the principle of maintaining judicial justice and administrating justice for the people. Actively responding to the needs of justice in the age of the internet, China has employed internet and information technology to empower the traditional judiciary, improved rules of cyber justice, and reformed models of cyber justice. This has allowed it to settle new types of cyber disputes in accordance with the law, combat cybercrime, safeguard the rights and interests of cyberspace players, and deliver judicial services that are more fair, just, open, transparent, efficient, accessible, inclusive, and equitable.

1. Defining New Rules of Cyber Justice

As new internet technologies, applications and business forms develop quickly, legal relationships in cyberspace are becoming more diverse, posing new challenges to the administration of justice in cyberspace. This calls for better-defined rules of cyber justice.

For this purpose, China has produced timely judicial interpretations of civil and criminal issues such as intellectual property rights, the right to dignity, online transactions, and unfair competition on the internet, as well as telecom and online fraud. It has handled a good number of unprecedented, complicated cases that are closely related to the internet, such as those involving internet infrastructure security, algorithms, data rights and trading, protection of personal information, and management of online platforms. In the process, it has refined the criteria for the application of the law and made the standards for adjudication consistent. This has led to increasing clarity on the rules, code of conduct, and boundaries of rights, obligations and responsibilities in cyberspace. China has formulated rules for online litigation, mediation and operation of the people's courts, refined rules on taking electronic data as evidence, and standardized the procedures for handling cybercrime cases. As a result, a system of rules and procedures for cyber justice is taking shape. This systematic development of relevant rules provides regulatory guidance and institutional safeguards for cyber justice, which is therefore becoming more rule-based.

2. Exploring New Models of Cyber Justice

China has been active in exploring new channels, domains and models for further integrating internet technology with judicial activities, for the purpose of speedier delivery of justice. In order to build a cyber justice model with Chinese characteristics, it has piloted measures in applying the latest technologies such as big data, cloud computing, artificial intelligence and blockchain in judicial proceedings, judgment enforcement, judicial administration, and other fields.

Local courts are encouraged to explore new mechanisms with regional features for internet-empowered adjudication, on the basis of the development of local internet industry and the characteristics of local cyber disputes. Internet courts have been established in Hangzhou, Beijing and Guangzhou, in an attempt to realize adjudication of internet-related cases via the internet. In the process of digitalizing procuratorial work, China has used big data to empower legal oversight. It has systematically integrated a wide range of case information, worked on models and platforms for big data-based legal oversight, and implemented oversight of the prosecution of individual cases and of similar cases in order to address the common problems they raise. This has helped improve the quality and efficiency of legal oversight in the new era. The emergence of these new models signifies the further development of a socialist judicial system with Chinese characteristics in cyberspace, and is becoming a salient feature of China's judicial system.

Panel 5 Internet Courts

Internet courts represent a success in creating new judicial models. The Hangzhou Internet Court was established on August 18, 2017, followed by the opening of two more such courts in Beijing on September 9, 2018 and in Guangzhou on September 28. These internet courts focus on 11 types of internet-related dispute in the cities under their jurisdiction, including those involving online loan contracts, online infringement, and online copyright. They have helped advance technological innovation, rule-making, and cyberspace governance.

During the period between August 2017 and October 2019, these three courts handled a total of 118,764 internet-related cases, and concluded 88,401 of them. As many as 96.8 percent of these cases were filed online, and in 80,819 of these the entire process was handled via the internet. Online hearings took 45 minutes and case processing 38 days on average, which are in turn 40 percent and half of the time needed for conventional court trials. In 98 percent of the concluded cases, litigants accepted the ruling at first instance. All this indicates the good quality, efficiency and impact of internet courts.

3. Judicial Protection of Online Rights and Interests

China has carried out judicial activities to combat cybercrime, so that the people can see that justice is served in every judicial case.

Strengthening judicial protection of online civil rights and interests. To protect the online civil rights and interests of all parties concerned, China handles civil and commercial cases involving personal information, intellectual property rights, online transactions, and online infringement in accordance with the law. For protection of personal information, the focus is put on online platforms that process huge amounts of personal information. Civil public-interest litigations have been launched against online platforms suspected of abusing personal information. In adjudicating these cases, the courts have clarified the rules and limits for the commercial use of customers' personal information, and prompted companies running online platforms to collect and use data in accordance with laws and regulations. For protection of intellectual property rights in internet-related cases of high technological complexity such as those involving patents, integrated circuit designs, technological secrets, and computer software, the courts have introduced a technology investigator system. Step by step, safeguards are being set up in cyberspace to protect citizens' legitimate rights and interests there.

Intensifying punishment for cybercrime. As internet technology evolves swiftly, conventional crimes are transforming rapidly into internet-enabled, no-contact forms, leading to a rise in illicit acts such as telecom and online fraud, online gambling, and online pornography. China handles new types of cybercrime in accordance with the law. In recent years China has carried out a systematic "internet clean-up" campaign, combating cyber hacking, invasion of individual privacy, and many other criminal acts that cause strong concern to the public. It has launched a number of campaigns against telecom and online fraud, including those to hunt fugitives via cloud services and platforms, freeze the SIM cards and bank accounts used by suspects, intercept domestic recruitment by criminal groups operating from abroad, and pursue the heads and key members of criminal groups. It combats all types of predatory lending including trap loans, the student loan, reverse mortgage, and elder investment scams. It punishes in accordance with the law the shadowy businesses that provide services such as internet connection, domain registration, server hosting, mobile application development, online payment, and promotion to criminal groups behind telecom and online fraud.

China has also updated its national anti-fraud big data platform and anti-fraud app, built a national fraud database, and improved the mechanisms for quick freezing of payments and retrieval of swindled money. It takes resolute action against online gambling and delivers harsh punishments for online pornography. Through these efforts, remarkable progress has been made in combating cybercrime, giving the people a stronger sense of security and reinforcing social harmony and stability.

See page 11

DOCUMENT

From page 10

Panel 6 Going after Cybercrime

Telecom and online fraud harms citizens' immediate interests and property safety, and undermines social harmony and stability. It is therefore deeply loathed by the people. To address this global scourge, China targets all elements with in-depth measures, which have achieved good results. Between 2019 and 2021 China prosecuted 129,000 people on charges of telecom and online fraud. Between 2017 and 2021 it concluded 103,000 lawsuits of such fraud in the first instance, and convicted 223,000 criminals.

Exploring new avenues for judicial protection of minors in cyberspace. While focusing on forestalling and punishing cybercrime, China takes targeted measures against online criminal activities such as virtual sexual harassment, and has increased punishments for those preying on minors. Through law-based punishment and individualized assistance and education, the state does its utmost to rehabilitate underage people involved in cybercrime. China has strengthened the protection of minors in cyberspace, making breakthroughs in typical cases such as those concerning circulation of audio and video about narcotics, violation of minors' personal information rights and interests, and excessive livestream rewards from minor viewers. By taking action in the form of public-interest litigation, written suggestions from prosecutorial organizations, support for prosecutions, and briefings on relevant information, China is working to pool the strength of online platforms, the public, and the government to foster a healthy cyber environment for young people.

V. Promoting Public Awareness and Competence in Law-Based Cyberspace Governance

Public participation is necessary for spreading knowledge of the rule of law in cyberspace. China makes every effort to break new ground in the content, form and means of spreading legal knowledge via the internet. The Chinese netizens' awareness and understanding of the rule of law have generally increased, and online platforms have assumed their primary responsibility for legal compliance and the industry has embraced self-discipline. Respecting, learning, abiding by, and using the law is a shared understanding and basic principle, and the spirit of the socialist rule of law is fully manifested in cyberspace.

1. Internet Plus Public Legal Education

The internet has become a new space where people study, work and live; it provides a new platform for them to obtain information and access public services, which makes it a new avenue and means to spread knowledge of the law. The internet has changed the structure of legal literacy from unidirectional communication to interactive, service-based and immersive communication, and interpreted technical terms in plain everyday language. The participants have become increasingly active with better experiences and more gain.

Employing the internet to spread knowledge of the law. Government websites and WeChat official accounts set up special columns and features to spread legal knowledge regarding eco-environmental progress, food and drug safety, protecting personal information, and other matters of public concern, with a focus on the Constitution, Civil Code, National Security Law, Cybersecurity Law, and other important laws and regulations. China makes full use of the legal publicity website (legalinfo.moj.gov.cn), its weibo account, WeChat account and app and builds a smart legal publicity platform to spread knowledge and experience of the rule of law in China, so as to inculcate the idea in the public that rights and duties are integral to each other, as are personal freedom and social responsibility, to raise legal consciousness that laws should be applied to regulate behaviors and solve problems and conflicts, and to guide the people to advocate, abide by and defend the socialist rule of law.

Strengthening legal literacy through online media. With their strengths in content, channels, and resources, internet media have created a large number of graphics, cartoons, comics, short videos, livestream, and online music products on internet forums, blogs, microblogs, WeChat official accounts, instant messaging tools, livestreaming, search engines, Q&A communities and through many other channels that are tailored to meet the different needs of various groups in spreading legal awareness and explaining laws and regulations. These give the people direct access to the government's public legal education information that has deeply penetrated businesses, communities, campuses, and villages. Legal literacy has improved significantly among all the people.

Extending real-world legal literacy efforts into the virtual world. With the widespread integration of the internet with the economy and social life, those lectures, legal literacy initiatives in communities, legal consulting services, and artistic performances on the rule of law that used to be conducted in the real world are now expanding their influence and coverage through the internet. Online legal literacy training courses, micro-video contests, and quiz games are integrating with and complementing those face-to-face activities, attracting wider participation, and benefiting a larger population.

2. Publicizing Cyber Laws and Regulations

Cyber laws and regulations are the main content of public legal education in cyberspace. They are becoming increasingly familiar to the public, providing the foundation for a sound and law-based cyberspace with high ethical standards.

Cyber laws and regulations are publicized during the whole legislative process. When drafting cyber laws and regulations such as the Cybersecurity Law, Data Security Law, and Personal Information Protection Law, the opinions of citizens, legal persons and other organizations are heard and can be adopted through public solicitation, deliberation, and appraisal via both online and offline channels. When these laws and regulations were promulgated, questions were explained through press conferences, answers to media questions, and expert interpretation. The public have been encouraged to learn more about cyber laws and regulations, and abide by them, which lays a solid public foundation for the law-based governance of cyberspace.

Legal literacy efforts are also being made in law enforcement and judicial activities when appropriate. To explain cyber laws, China releases information on typical cases of public concern, including online dissemination of illegal and harmful information, infringement of rights and interests relating to personal information, telecom and online fraud, and protection of minors in cyberspace. All cases relating to cyberspace are accessible to the public through four websites – adjudication procedure information (splcgk.court.gov.cn), court trial information (tingshen.court.gov.cn), judgment information (wenshu.court.gov.cn), and enforcement information (zxgk.court.gov.cn). The general public can access this information in a more direct and vivid way, and have evolved from onlookers to participants, supporters and advocates.

3. Raising Legal Awareness of Key Groups

The authority of the law comes from the people's firm belief and sincere support. China focuses its legal literacy efforts on key groups like teenagers and internet company employees. Teenagers are guided to adhere to laws, conduct themselves with civility, and follow cybersecurity protocols when surfing the internet. Internet companies are under supervision for their compliance with laws and regulations, and they are also required to guard against legal risks.

Improving education on cyber laws among teenagers. Teenagers are the future of the country and the hope of our nation. They are a growing demographic in China's netizen population. As the pioneers of the internet, they are the most active participants in online classes, communication, and life, but their legitimate rights and interests are also vulnerable to infringement on the internet. To protect their rights and interests and promote their healthy growth and well-rounded development, China makes every effort to improve their understanding of the rule of law in cyberspace, especially on critical concerns such as internet addiction, cyberbullying, and online pornography. Varied and vivid forms are adapted to their physical and mental development and their realities, such as story books, micro variety shows, plays for kids, radio stories, online classes, quiz games, and law classes taught in primary and secondary schools by police officers, prosecutors and judges who serve as part-time vice principals. A public legal education framework integrating government, society, schools and families has taken shape, which promotes the all-round legal awareness of juvenile netizens and builds their cybersecurity competence.

Panel 7 A Website for Promoting Legal Literacy Among Teenagers – qspfw.moe.gov.cn

China launched the teenagers' legal literacy website (qspfw.moe.gov.cn) in 2012, which features columns such as animated films/TV programs, real-life stories, and laws taught through pictures. More than 190,000 schools have now registered with the website, involving over 150 million users. In 2021 alone, there were 8.3 billion views on the website to learn about the Constitution.

Strengthening internet companies' compliance with the law. Internet companies are the main market players in the digital economy, and should promote its healthy development. Honesty and observing the law must be their cardinal principles. China is intensifying its efforts to promote legal literacy among internet companies, and requiring them to incorporate cyber laws into their induction and routine training. This applies especially to laws with a direct bearing on corporate operations and industry development, such as the Electronic Commerce Law, Cybersecurity Law, Data Security Law, Personal Information Protection Law, Anti-Monopoly Law, and Anti-Unfair Competition Law. Industry associations are encouraged to provide legal education in various forms for internet companies and their employees, and to ensure that the companies place equal emphasis on economic returns and social benefit. They are also required to guide – through improving industry norms, formulating industry standards, and issuing business integrity initiatives – the companies to fulfill their legal and social responsibilities. With such measures, consumers' legitimate rights and interests are fully protected, and fair competition in the market is ensured.

4. Strengthening Research and Education on Law-Based Cyberspace Governance

Education and professional practitioners of law-based cyberspace governance underpin a cyber power and drive innovation. Facing major theoretical problems in law-based cyberspace governance and a demand for talented people, China has established a preliminary system for cultivating professionals and conducting research that combines theory and practice, adapts to the development of cyberspace, and provides intellectual support and sufficient talented people for the country's law-based cyberspace governance.

Improving comprehensive research capabilities on law-based cyberspace governance. Universities and scientific research institutes have set up new-type think tanks to conduct relevant research and established a number of comprehensive research centers. By June 2022, China had more than 90 research institutes in this field. Serving as a bank of brain trusters, ideas, and talented people, these think tanks have conducted research in many frontier areas like data, algorithms, and platform management, and produced remarkable academic results. Experts and academics are fully engaged in relevant activities and offer constructive advice on China's major plans, legislation and reforms in law-based cyberspace governance.

Strengthening the training of personnel for law-based cyberspace governance. China integrates conventional legal studies with internet-related disciplines. Cybersecurity studies have been categorized as a primary discipline, and some universities have set up secondary disciplines like internet and information law studies, digital law studies, and artificial intelligence law studies. In line with specified regulations and procedures, institutions of higher learning, on their own initiative, have run undergraduate courses on the rule of law in cyberspace such as cybersecurity and law enforcement. Teams of research and teaching in cyber law have been organized to teach interdisciplinary courses that integrate legal knowledge with computer science and statistics, such as network and information security, laws and artificial intelligence, cyber law studies, blockchain and digital evidence, and legal analytics. A group of practical textbooks covering frontier research have been compiled for students in relevant majors, including cyber law, computational jurisprudence, data law, and personal information protection law. A large number of personnel with professional knowledge of both law and technology have been trained, providing a solid foundation for building up China's strength in cyberspace.

VI. Increasing International Exchanges and Cooperation in Law-Based Cyberspace Governance

Cyberspace is a shared activity space for all of humanity. All countries around the globe share the same desire to develop the digital economy; all face the same challenges posed by cybersecurity threats and have the same need for strengthening cyberspace governance.

China is fully engaged in international exchanges and cooperation in the field of law-based governance of cyberspace. Upholding independence, equality, and mutual respect, it joins with other countries to reform the global cyberspace governance system, to ensure that all countries share the opportunities and fruits brought by the development of the internet, and to jointly build a community with a shared future in cyberspace.

1. Playing an Active Role in Rule Making

China is committed to international fairness and justice. It resolutely safeguards the international system with the United Nations at its core, and the international order with international law as its foundation, and upholds the basic norms of international relations based on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. It supports the participation of all countries in global cyberspace governance on an equal footing, and in laying down international cyberspace rules that are universally accepted.

China supports the UN's role as the main channel in international cyberspace governance. It supports the UN effort to formulate a global-level cybercrime convention, has pushed for the General Assembly to adopt a resolution to establish an open-ended ad hoc intergovernmental committee of experts, and has played a constructive role in the negotiations on a convention. It calls on the international community to reach agreement on an authoritative and universal convention at the earliest possible time to lay a legal foundation for the battle against cybercrime. China values the UN's key role in responding to international information security threats, and together with other Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states it submitted the original International Code of Conduct for Information Security to the UN General Assembly, and an updated version in 2015. It launched the Global Data Security Initiative, and issued the China-League of Arab States Cooperation Initiative on Data Security together with the League of Arab States in March 2021, and the Data Security Cooperation Initiative of China+Central Asia together with five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) in June 2022, which provide a blueprint for developing global data security rules. China encouraged the UN to draw up a framework for responsible state behavior in cyberspace, making clear that the principles of international law – such as equal sovereignty, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-use of force, non-interference in other countries' domestic affairs – are also applicable in cyberspace, and that impartial global security standards for the supply chain of information technology products should be formulated. It has expanded its cyberspace cooperation with the UN's special organizations, taken an active part in formulating UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, and conducted extensive cooperation with the World Intellectual Property Organization in formulating domain name rules and settling disputes in this field.

Taking an active part in the formulation of regional cyberspace governance rules. China signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement, under which the 15 member states including China laid down regional rules regarding electronic signature and electronic authentication, online consumer protection, online personal information protection, cybersecurity, cross-border transfer of information by electronic means, and intellectual property right protection. Its e-commerce chapter is by some margin the world's most extensive and most used set of e-commerce rules. China has also taken vigorous steps to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement, in order to participate in the formulation of high-standard rules in the digital economy.

2. Conducting Extensive Exchanges and Cooperation

As a longstanding supporter of international exchanges and cooperation in the rule of law in cyberspace, China takes part in dialogues, negotiations, exchanges, and mutual learning with other countries. It continues to expand and strengthen the network of global partnerships based on equality, openness, and cooperation, and to promote international cyberspace governance that is driven by common progress and designed for shared benefit.

Engaging in bilateral and multilateral dialogues and exchanges in law-based cyberspace governance. China has established the Sino-Russian Information Security Consultation Mechanism, China-EU Taskforce, China-ASEAN Cyber Dialogue Mechanism, and China-Japan-ROK Trilateral Cyber Consultation Mechanism, and co-hosted the 2019 China-Germany Dialogue on the Internet Economy, China-UK Internet Roundtable, China-ROK Internet Roundtable, China-Cuba Internet Development Forum, and China-Brazil Internet Governance Seminar. Through these pragmatic exchanges, it has worked with other countries on cyber policies, laws, regulations, and governance experience. It has responded promptly to the concerns of various parties, and settled disputes through negotiation on an equal footing. It has signed cybersecurity cooperation memorandums with countries including Thailand and Indonesia to strengthen exchanges and sharing in cybersecurity policies, laws and regulations, and to jointly build capacity in cybersecurity.

Increasing international law enforcement and judicial cooperation on cybersecurity. China has reached agreements on cybersecurity with many other countries and carried out in-depth and pragmatic cooperation in fighting cyberterrorism and telecom and online fraud. To combat cyberterrorism, China has increased cooperation with other countries through joint counterterrorism maneuvers, joint border defense operations, and police and judicial cooperation to meet threats and challenges and safeguard world peace and regional stability. In fighting telecom and online fraud, China has strengthened law enforcement and judicial cooperation with other countries, investigated major cross-border cases, and achieved substantial results. Between March and June 2022, 76 countries including China took part in an operation codenamed First Light 2022 initiated by the International Criminal Police Organization, with some 2,000 suspects arrested and some US$50 million worth of illicit funds intercepted, which effectively curbed transnational social engineering scams.

Jointly protecting the rights and interests of minors in cyberspace. China cooperates with the United Nations Children's Fund, the International Association of Internet Hotlines, and other international organizations, and relevant departments of the United Kingdom, Germany, the United Arab Emirates and other countries to fight online child pornography. As a member of WeProtect Global Alliance, China works with other member governments, companies and civil society organizations – totaling more than 200 – to combat child sexual exploitation and abuse online and create a safer cyber environment for children.

3. Creating Platforms for Dialogue

As a responsible major country, China has made great efforts to build a global platform promoting connectivity between China and the rest of the world, and a Chinese platform for the global internet to be shared and governed by all. It has played an active role in promoting connections, understanding, and mutual trust in the rule of law in cyberspace between different countries.

Hosting the world internet conferences for exchanging ideas on the rule of law in cyberspace. Every year since 2014, China has hosted the World Internet Conference, attended by representatives from governments, international organizations, internet companies, think tanks, industry associations, and technology communities. The organizing committee of the conference released a concept document named Jointly Build a Community with a Shared Future in Cyberspace, which calls for "respecting sovereignty in cyberspace" and points out that "the principle of sovereign equality enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations is a basic norm governing contemporary international relations. It covers all aspects of state-to-state relations, and should likewise apply to cyberspace." The organizing committee also launched the Initiative on Jointly Building a Community with a Shared Future in Cyberspace, proposing that "international exchanges and cooperation should be advanced in the fields of data security, personal information protection and relevant rules and standards, and efforts should be made to promote mutual recognition among countries on rules and standards on personal information protection in line with the purposes of the UN Charter." China has shared experience in legislation on the protection of minors, combated cybercrimes and cyberbullying targeted at minors, and further improved mechanisms for combating cybercrimes and cyberterrorism. It has supported and taken an active part in negotiations under the framework of the United Nations on the global convention against cybercrimes, and coordinated work on legislation and practices in different countries in a joint effort to tackle the threats of cybercrimes and cyberterrorism.

Panel 8 The International Organization of the World Internet Conference

China initiated the international organization of the World Internet Conference in 2022, with the goal of building a global internet platform featuring extensive consultation, joint contribution, and sharing of benefits. By promoting sharing of benefits through practical cooperation, it aims to identify strong points and contribute ideas to global internet governance. Institutes, organizations, enterprises, and individuals engaging in the internet from nearly 20 countries in six continents have now joined the organization as founding members.

Building multi-form, multi-channel and multi-tiered international platforms to exchange views, experience and practices on law-based cyberspace governance including legislation, law enforcement, judicial work, and public legal education. China organizes this through many multilateral platforms like the BRICS cooperation mechanism, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization, and ASEAN Regional Forum. It hosted the World Forum on Rule of Law in Internet, and released the Wuzhen Declaration at the event, building a bridge for sharing experience, increasing understanding, and learning from each other in cyberspace justice. China supports industry associations of the internet to build international exchange platforms such as the China Internet Governance Forum, discussing such issues as digital inclusion and data governance. These platforms have promoted common understanding among Chinese and foreign internet communities, and facilitated joint solutions to the problems obstructing the development of the internet. China encourages Chinese experts and academics to attend academic forums and symposiums, conduct intellectual exchanges, and share research fruits with their foreign counterparts in frontier research on the digital economy, data security, governance of artificial intelligence, and other related matters.

Conclusion

Based on its own realities, and learning from other countries' experience, China has created a cyberspace governance model with distinct Chinese characteristics. On the new journey towards a modern socialist country, China will always be committed to all-round law-based governance of the country and of cyberspace. It will promote the lawful, orderly and healthy development of the internet in China, safeguard the high-quality development of a digital China under the rule of law, and provide a solid legal guarantee for building up China's strength in cyberspace.

The internet benefits the whole world. China champions the interests of the peoples of all countries in promoting the development and prosperity of cyberspace in accordance with the law. The rule of law in cyberspace is an important tool of digital governance, and a marker of digital progress. Facing the opportunities and challenges brought about by digitalization, China will follow the global governance principle of achieving shared growth through consultation and collaboration, and work together with the international community to ensure global cyberspace governance is law-based, and that digital progress will deliver greater benefit to the people. China stands ready to partner with all other countries to build a community with a shared future in cyberspace and create a better world.

WORLD

Cyclone havoc

Pallbearers carry a coffin at the burial ceremony for some of the people who lost their lives following heavy rains caused by Cyclone Freddy in Blantyre, Malawi, on Wednesday. The cyclone is set to move away from land, bringing some relief to regions that have been ravaged by torrential rains. THOKO CHIKONDI / AP

Beijing calls for dialogue on Ukraine crisis

By MO JINGXI
mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

China is concerned over the escalation and possible loss of control of the Ukraine crisis, and urges all parties to remain calm and restrained, resume peace talks at an early date and return to the track of political settlement, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang said on Thursday.

In a phone conversation with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, Qin said China hopes Ukraine and Russia could reserve prospects for dialogue and negotiations and never shut the doors to political settlement no matter how difficult and challenging it would be.

Qin reiterated China's objective and fair position on the Ukraine issue, saying that Beijing will continue to play a constructive role in resuming peace talks, easing tensions and restoring peace.

Kuleba briefed Qin on the latest developments and prospects for peace talks, and expressed appreciation for the humanitarian assistance provided by China to Ukraine.

The document regarding the political settlement of the Ukraine crisis issued by China showed China's sincerity to push for a cease-fire and peace talks, he said, adding that Ukraine hopes to maintain communication with China.

In terms of bilateral ties, Qin said the China-Ukraine relationship has maintained a momentum of development over the past 31 years since establishing diplomatic ties. China also appreciates Ukraine's willingness to establish a sincere relationship with China on the basis of mutual respect.

Noting that pragmatic cooperation is well-grounded and has huge potential, Qin said China is ready to work with Ukraine to constantly develop a stable relationship, and China's modernization drive will also provide greater opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation.

Kuleba said China is not only an important partner of Ukraine, but also an indispensable major country that plays a crucial role in global affairs. He also congratulated China for brokering an agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran on the restoration of diplomatic ties.

Ukraine considers its relationship with China from a long-term perspective and will continue to abide by the one-China principle and respect China's territorial integrity, he said, expressing hope to enhance mutual trust and deepen cooperation in all fields with China.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken also spoke with Kuleba via phone on Thursday.

'Common ground' sought at cost of ROK laborers

China urges Japan to develop 'normal ties' with neighbors due to past atrocities

By WANG XU in Tokyo, MO JINGXI and ZHAO RUINAN in Beijing

In the first such summit in 12 years, the Republic of Korea's President Yoon Suk-yeol succeeded in persuading Japan to lift its chip material curbs on Thursday, while meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida amid lingering skepticism and opposition back home.

The two-day visit, which came after Seoul announced a proposal last week to settle a wartime labor dispute with Japan using money mainly from ROK companies instead of from Japan, was largely regarded as an olive branch offered by Yoon to Tokyo.

However, the result of the visit remains to be seen. Japan's Kyodo News said Japan is still watching "whether Seoul will implement the solution in a steady manner", citing unidentified sources who said.

The wait-and-see mentality was widespread in Tokyo as Kishida told Yoon that Japan "would like to exchange opinions on strengthening communication between governments in a wide range of fields".

In response, Yoon said: "It has a special meaning in announcing to the people of both countries that the relationship between the ROK and Japan, which has been in a difficult situation due to various pending issues, will make a new start."

In 2018, the ROK's top court ordered two Japanese companies — Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Nippon Steel — to compensate victims of forced labor during Japan's 1910-1945 colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula. The dispute over the compensation has pushed relations between Tokyo and Seoul to the lowest point in decades.

Under Yoon's proposal, a ROK government-backed foundation will pay compensation to plaintiffs who won lawsuits instead of Japanese companies that were sued.

Unpopular plan

Consequently, the plan was welcomed in Tokyo, but several key victims in the ROK have already rejected the proposal, and polls showed that it is generally unpopular.

A Gallup Korea survey showed that 59 percent of ROK respondents oppose the plan because of the absence of an apology and lack of compensation from Japan, while some 64 percent do not consider Yoon's compensation adequate.

On Thursday, protesters in Seoul wore masks of Yoon and Kishida while taking part in a rally near the presidential office to voice their objection to the summit.

Commenting on the summit, China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said in Beijing that Japan should develop "normal relations" with Asian neighbors due to Tokyo's past atrocities and that China opposes certain countries attempting to form exclusive circles.

"As a close neighbor of both Japan and the ROK, China has noticed the recent interactions and changes in relations between the two countries," Wang said during a regular news briefing on Thursday, noting the sufferings that Japanese militarism and its colonial rule have once brought to Asian countries. He added that China has always urged Japan to reflect on its history of aggression and properly handle historical issues with an honest and responsible attitude.

"Japan should only develop normal relations with Asian neighbors based on this premise," he said.

China, Japan and the ROK are each other's important trading partners, and it serves the interests of three countries and the whole region to keep regional and global industry and supply chains stable and unfettered, Wang said.

"We oppose certain countries' attempt to form exclusive blocs and hope Japan-ROK relations could move forward in a way conducive to regional peace, stability and prosperity," he added.

Zhan Debin, an international relations professor at Shanghai University of International Business and Economics, said the military cooperation between Tokyo and Seoul would lead to increased mistrust between regional countries or would incite an arms race.

The meeting reaffirms Seoul's dependence on the US for diplomatic security and its lack of autonomy in many aspects, Zhan added.

Contact the writers at wangxu@chinadaily.com.cn.

Chinese fugitive arrested for $1b fraud

By CHINA DAILY

Guo Wengui, one of China's most wanted fugitives, was arrested in New York on Wednesday on charges that he oversaw a $1 billion fraud conspiracy, local media reported.

The 54-year-old had been accused of multiple crimes before he fled China in 2014 and arrived in the United States the next year. He is also the subject of an Interpol Red Notice — an international arrest warrant.

The US Justice Department accused Guo along with his co-conspirator and another aide of various crimes, including wire and securities fraud. Guo was charged in court papers under the name Ho Wan Kwok.

US prosecutors said the indictment stemmed from a complex scheme in which Guo lied to hundreds of thousands of people around the world before misappropriating hundreds of millions of dollars.

At an arraignment in Manhattan federal court on Wednesday, Guo pleaded not guilty through his attorney. One of his lawyers did not immediately comment.

The top federal prosecutor in Manhattan, US Attorney Damian Williams, said in a statement that Guo was charged with "lining his pockets with the money he stole, including buying himself, and his close relatives, a 50,000-square-foot (4,645-square-meter) mansion, a $3.5 million Ferrari, and even two $36,000 mattresses, and financing a $37 million luxury yacht".

As he lived in New York, he developed a close relationship with Steve Bannon, former US president Donald Trump's political strategist.

In 2020, Bannon was arrested on a charge of defrauding donors while he was aboard Guo's 45-meter yacht anchored off Connecticut.

According to media outlets, Guo was arrested in his luxury apartment near Central Park on Wednesday morning. Prosecutors asked that Guo be held because of the risk he could flee and "the danger he poses to the community". They say Guo would face more than 100 years in prison if convicted of all charges.

Guo's co-conspirator, Je Kin Ming, 55, who had been living in London, was indicted in the case but has not been arrested.

Yanping Wang, described by media as Guo's top aide, also faces charges, including conspiracy, wire fraud and securities fraud.

Since September, the US government has seized approximately $634 million from 21 bank accounts associated with Guo.

The Securities and Exchange Commission, or SEC, also brought civil charges against Guo on Wednesday, accusing him of deceiving investors through dishonest online and social media posts and videos, including some that claimed a crypto asset called "H-Coin" was backed by gold reserves.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Peace call

A man protests in front of a convention center in Makuhari Messe, in Japan's Chiba prefecture, on Wednesday. Hundreds of people gathered outside the venue of a military equipment fair near Tokyo on Wednesday to protest against Japan's move to intensify its arms trade. ZHANG XIAOYU / XINHUA

US, Russian military chiefs resume talks

WASHINGTON/MOSCOW — US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke to his Russian counterpart on Wednesday about the downing of a US intelligence drone in the Black Sea.

It was the first call between Austin and Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu since October. And Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had a similar call with his Russian counterpart Valery Gerasimov, chief of the General Staff of the Russian armed forces.

"We take any potential for escalation very seriously. And that's why I believe it's important to keep the lines of communication open," Austin said during a Pentagon news briefing. "I think that will help to prevent miscalculation going forward."

Shoigu told Austin that "increased intelligence activities against the interests of the Russian Federation" and "non-compliance with the restricted flight zone" declared by Moscow due to its campaign in Ukraine had led to the incident, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

The ministry also warned that it would react "proportionately" to any future US "provocations". The Kremlin also said Moscow would try to recover the drone's wreckage.

But Milley downplayed the significance of any potential recovery by Russia. "It probably broke up. There's probably not a lot to recover," he said.

According to a Reuters report, the US military MQ-9 Reaper surveillance drone crashed on Tuesday after being intercepted by Russian fighter jets. The Pentagon said one of the Russian Su-27 jets struck the propeller of the drone, making it inoperable, a claim denied by Moscow.

The Reaper, according to a statement by Russia's Defense Ministry, was flying over the sea near the Crimean Peninsula and intruded into an area that was declared off-limits by Russia as part of its military operation in Ukraine, causing the military to scramble fighters to intercept it.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

HIGHER GROUND

Feb sustains housing recovery

Helpful policies, release of pent-up demand herald stability in property prices

By WANG YING in Shanghai
wang_ying@chinadaily.com.cn

A property construction site in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The property market recovery continued in February as more Chinese cities reported a month-on-month growth while the year-on-year decline narrowed in lower-tier cities, official data showed on Thursday.

In February, out of the 70 Chinese cities tracked by the National Bureau of Statistics, 55 cities reported month-on-month growth in new home prices, 19 more than a month ago.

Year-on-year, however, first-tier cities reported growth against a smaller drop seen in second- and third-tier cities, said Sheng Guoqing, chief statistician of the NBS' urban division.

The improved performance resulted from supportive policies and pent-up demand finding a release in the past month, Sheng said.

Fourteen of the 70 major cities reported year-on-year price rises in February. The corresponding figure in January was 15, NBS data showed on Thursday.

On average, new home prices of the 70 major cities edged up 0.3 percent month-on-month in February, but declined 1.9 percent year-on-year, said Yan Yuejin, director of the Shanghai-based E-house China Research and Development Institution.

"This is the first time since September 2021 that the 70 cities' average home price index turned positive, thus ending the 17-month negative trend. This turning point will boost market confidence and promote the recovery of the real estate sector," said Yan.

A broad rally in home prices appeared in major Chinese cities, which also indicated the strong momentum for home prices to get further stabilized, Yan said.

New home prices in four top-tier cities registered a 1.7 percent growth year-on-year in February, and increased 0.2 percent month-on-month, NBS data showed.

New home prices in 31 second-tier cities tracked by the NBS reported a growth of 0.4 percent month-on-month on average in February, but contracted 0.7 percent year-on-year.

New home prices in 35 third-tier cities grew 0.3 percent month-on-month but fell 3.3 percent year-on-year.

Prices of pre-owned homes also staged a recovery. In this segment of the market, for the first time since August 2021, cities reporting price growth outnumbered those reporting price falls, said Chen Xiao, a senior analyst with the Zhuge Real Estate Data Research Center.

In all, 40 cities saw their existing home prices rise month-on-month in February, 27 more than the previous month. And seven cities recorded a growth in prices year-on-year, one more than a month earlier.

Pre-owned home prices in the four first-tier cities rose 0.7 percent from the previous month. Compared to a year ago, the prices rose 1 percent.

Pre-owned home prices in 31 second-tier cities edged up 0.1 percent from a month ago, but fell 2.9 percent year-on-year. Pre-owned home prices in 35 third-tier cities stayed flat month-on-month, but fell 4.4 percent year-on-year.

"The home price index in February showed the sector has entered a phase of stabilization, and this trend will extend into March," Chen said.

On the back of China's rapid reopening and the robust recovery that appeared in industries sensitive to COVID-19 in the first two months this year, Goldman Sachs raised its forecast for China's GDP growth in 2023 from 5.5 percent to 6 percent on Thursday.

There were some improvements in property activities in the Chinese mainland, showing new progress is being achieved after a monthslong downturn, Goldman Sachs noted.

The nation's top 100 property enterprises reported 37.16 billion yuan ($5.4 billion) in sales revenue on average in 2022, down 25 percent year-on-year, according to the China Index Academy. Their average net profit last year tumbled more than 54 percent to 2.19 billion yuan.

The sluggish performance was due to the COVID-19 outbreaks, a market slowdown and the rising costs, said the academy.

CSPL's Egypt port stake to boost trade, biz, BRI

By ZHONG NAN
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

Hong Kong-listed COSCO Shipping Ports Ltd or CSPL, a subsidiary of Shanghai-based China COSCO Shipping Corp specializing in port operations, announced on Thursday that it has picked up a 25 percent stake in a new container terminal at Egypt's Ain Sokhna Port for about $375 million.

A major port for Egypt, the Persian Gulf and Asia, Ain Sokhna Port is located at the south of the entrance to the Suez Canal, about 120 kilometers east of Cairo. It is close to the northwest end of the Suez Canal Economic Zone.

State-owned CSPL said in a statement that it signed the project agreement with its partners in Egypt on Wednesday.

CSPL will operate this project for 30 years. The terminal's throughput capacity after completion is expected to reach 1.7 million twenty-foot equivalent unit containers.

CSPL said the new container project will be constructed and operated by a number of companies from different segments in both Egypt and other countries.

According to Egypt's growth plans, the Suez Canal Economic Zone has an area of 460.6 square kilometers, and will be developed into Egypt's industrial, technological and global logistics center.

The development of the economic zone will boost Ain Sokhna Port's competitiveness in the Red Sea region and it will become an important logistics hub in the region and Africa as a whole, said Zhao Fengnian, CSPL's chief accountant.

CSPL's investment will also help improve trade links between China and Egypt/Africa, said Zhao, adding that sustained expansion its global terminal network is one of CSPL's key growth strategies.

CSPL is involved in the development of another terminal in Egypt — the Suez Canal Container Terminal — at Port Said. The facility functions as a transshipment hub for the eastern Mediterranean region at the northern entrance to the Suez Canal. The investment in the Ain Sokhna Port terminal will help CSPL to optimize its global layout, the company said in a statement.

CSPL's portfolio of terminals to date covers Asia, the Middle East, Europe, South America and the Mediterranean. By the end of 2022, the Chinese company operated and managed 367 berths at 37 ports worldwide, of which 220 were for containers, with a combined annual handling capacity of 122 million TEUs.

Given the strategic importance of Ain Sokhna Port's geographic location for both regional and global trade, CSPL's investment will facilitate China, Egypt and other economies participating in the Belt and Road Initiative to boost their export volume and generate business opportunities in transportation, manufacturing and services sectors, said Zhou Zhicheng, a researcher at the Beijing-based China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing.

Liu Zhongmin, a professor in Middle East Studies at Shanghai International Studies University, said that with Egypt and China creating more favorable conditions to enhance the synergy between the BRI and Egypt's Vision 2030, their economic and trade ties will be further enriched in the coming years.

Launched in 2016 by the Egyptian government, Vision 2030 is a unified long-term political, economic and social vision, developed in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

In recent years, Egypt succeeded in drawing Chinese investments under the BRI framework. The flagship project in this context is the China-Egypt TEDA Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone, which has gradually become one of the important platforms for China-Egypt economic and trade cooperation, according to information released by the Egyptian embassy in Beijing.

Nation's aging demographic to be well protected

By ZHANG YUE
zhangyue@chinadaily.com.cn

China should make more significant efforts to push forward the country's senior care system in a market-oriented manner, expand the pilot scope of the personal pension system and better utilize both State-owned and private capital to ease pressure facing the country's current pension benefits, a political adviser said.

Bai Tao, a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and also chairman of China Life Insurance Co Ltd, said in a recent exclusive interview with China Daily that considering China's large population, more robust and consolidated efforts are promptly required to shore up the country's weak links in the pension system, with market players playing a more prominent role in seeking high-quality growth.

Bai said that by 2021, China's accumulated pension funds, comprised of basic pension insurance, annuities and private pension funds, came in at about 10 trillion yuan ($1.45 trillion), while beds available in elder care and nursing centers for seniors stood at about 8.135 million.

Yet compared with the fast-growing trend of China's aging population and the need for more elder care services, shortcomings and deficiencies remain acute. For instance, he said that total value of pension funds is currently inadequate to meet future needs, and that in the coming five to 10 years, China is likely to see a pension gap reaching 8 to 10 trillion yuan.

Therefore, Bai suggested steps to expand the scale of pensions, and to relax conditions for enterprises' annuity plans, while expanding the pilot scope of the personal pension system in an orderly manner.

"Total supply of elder care goods and services also falls short compared with market demand. In addition, there are visible incongruities in the current elder care services systems. Current senior care services available have been uneven, with more market-oriented institutions seeking profits by actively providing high-end care for the aged. However, the vast demand for lower-cost elder care for most households has so far been left unmet," he said.

Due to the relative large amount of investment required as well as the high operational costs of running services for seniors, Bai said that caring for the elderly in China has yet to create a business model that is both profitable and sustainable, and there is the lack of market participation, particularly among private capital.

He suggested that more efforts are still required from the policy front to ensure that both State-owned and private capital are properly guided and incentivized to be engaged in construction of the elder care system.

"These two kinds of capital, with their features distinctively different, are equally important in building China's multitiered elder care system," he said. "Specifically, given that current shortcomings in the senior care system are more acute in more comprehensive eldercare facilities, I believe State-owned capital will play a greater role in shouldering its social responsibilities and strike a delicate balance between social and economic returns by participating in elder care."

Newly unveiled figures from the National Bureau of Statistics showed that by 2022, China had an over-65 population of 210 million, taking up 14.9 percent of the country's total population.

Bai added that consumption of senior care products and services is likely to increase rapidly in the years and decades to come, and is expected to become a critical fulcrum driving domestic demand, given the demographic's rapidly rising ranks.

Infant care takes more than baby steps

By ZHENG YIRAN
zhengyiran@chinadaily.com.cn

China's maternal and infant care market is expected to embrace rapid development thanks to the rising consumption power of new parents.

According to a report from Guosen Securities, in 2020, the growth rate of China's overall maternal and infant care market was 16.9 percent. In 2021, the growth rate stayed at 16.9 percent, indicating that the market is enjoying stable sales performance.

Data from Shanghai Ourui Supply Chain Management Co Ltd showed that in 2021, China's maternal and infant care market was valued at 32 billion yuan ($4.6 billion), and is expected to reach over 50 billion yuan by 2025.

"The post-'90s generation has become the backbone of maternal and infant consumption. Compared to the loving child care provided by their parents and grandparents, young new parents embody the characteristics of meticulous childcare, and their corresponding needs are also increasing," said Zhang Xiaojun, founder and CEO of domestic maternal and infant care brand Dexter.

Population shifts and economic development are also laying a solid foundation for the development of the market. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed that currently, the number of infants between 0 and 6 years old stands at 140 million, thus generating huge demand. In 2021, China's average per capita disposable income reached 35,128 yuan, surging 78 percent in 10 years.

Data from Beijing-based research firm huaon.com showed that currently, China's overall maternal and infant care market was divided equally between domestic and international brands. In 2016, among the top 15 maternal and infant care brands sold in China, domestic brands took up 18 percent of the market. In 2020, the ratio had risen to 20 percent.

Industry experts noted that the rise of domestic brands was related to changing consumer tastes and preferences.

"My parents prefer international brands, believing that foreign brands mean higher quality. However, my husband and I don't have such 'bias'. We buy a lot of domestic maternal and infant care products," said Liu Ting, a post-'90s mom in Beijing.

"International maternal and infant brands entered the Chinese market early, giving them an advantage. For example, people in their 60s encountered the era when foreign brands such as Johnson & Johnson entered the Chinese market, making them have a natural trust in international brands," said Shi Hai, an analyst at online finance media jiedianqj.com.

"However, new-generation parents are confident about our national strength and homegrown brands, and therefore are willing to buy domestic maternal and infant care products," Shi said.

According to a recent report from Alibaba's Tmall e-commerce platform, new-generation parents pay more attention to the efficacy of baby shampoo and shower products. On the basis of basic two-in-one and multifunction products, more detailed and safer efficacies such as soothing and moisturizing, silicone oil free, mild and tear-free features are widely sought after.

This puts forward higher research and development requirements on the brand and product development side. Brands need to undertake supportive measures in R&D so that the efficacy of products can meet more segmentation needs, industry experts said.

The section of Frog Prince brand, which focuses on infant care products, during an expo in Fuzhou, Fujian province.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

To realize high-quality development, Shi said brand differentiation is key. Currently, foreign brands such as Johnson & Johnson and leading domestic brands dominate the market. The future competition will be in brand differentiation, he said.

He added that the innovation of products will be a major driving force for market development. "With technological advances and rising consumer requirements related to product quality, the function and quality of maternal and infant care products should be constantly upgraded, so as to meet market needs. The diversification of channels is an important trend for future development of the market. In the future, enterprises should pay more attention to diversified distribution channels, explore new business modes, and raise sales and market share."

Briefly

China's power use increases in February

China's electricity consumption, a key barometer of economic activity, registered a robust increase in February, as COVID-triggered disruptions gradually waned and the country's economy recovered steadily. Total power use in China jumped 11 percent year-on-year last month to 695 billion kilowatt-hours, said the National Energy Administration. Electricity consumed by the secondary industrial sector in February surged 19.7 percent from a year ago. Power consumption in the primary and tertiary sectors rose 8.6 percent and 4.4 percent year-on-year, respectively.

Coal output higher in first two months

China's raw coal output posted a stable expansion in the first two months, official data showed. The country produced 730 million metric tons of raw coal in the January-February period, up 5.8 percent year-on-year, said the National Bureau of Statistics. The pace of growth was 3.4 percentage points faster than that of December last year, the bureau said.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

BUSINESS

Cruise tours sail smooth waters

Passengers snap up tickets for this year's itineraries as COVID impact seen weakening

By CHEN BOWEN in Haikou
chenbowen@chinadaily.com.cn

A cruise ship is berthed at a port in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, in December. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

China's cruise tourism market is expected to revive this year, supported by the country's optimized COVID-19 measures.

For international arrivals, starting Wednesday, Shanghai resumed visa-free entry for overseas cruise tour groups. In addition, in the 15 days after entering the metropolis, vessels carrying the groups can visit other Chinese coastal ports valid for cruise docking and passengers can go ashore to explore the areas during docking.

For domestic travelers, many domestic travel agencies and cruise line operators reported that all tickets for their cruise itineraries this year have been sold out.

Global cruise tourism demand is also booming, said the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), the world's largest trade association in the cruise sector.

According to a recent CLIA survey of 4,500 travelers, 91 percent of respondents who previously had taken a cruise said they intend to take such trips again, while 72 percent of those who have never taken a cruise said they were open to taking one.

China is now second only to the United States in terms of the number of cruise travelers. With a view of the recent massive sales growth, the Chinese cruise market has the potential to become the world's largest by 2030, according to China Merchants Viking Cruises.

The *China Merchants Shekou Yidun* cruise ship, carrying nearly 100 tourism industry representatives, set sail from Shenzhen's Shekou Port in Guangdong province last month.

The ship visited Sanya of Hainan province before returning to Shenzhen after completing an eight-day itinerary.

"There has been an increasing number of tourists taking cruises to Sanya, as it is a leisurely, elegant and luxurious way to travel," said Wang Ying, a representative of the Sanya Tourism Promotion Board, during a tourism promotional conference held on the ship.

"Taking a cruise to Sanya is a brand new experience for me," said Li Yanmei, a passenger. "I'll consider bringing other family members to experience this relaxing and fun tour next time."

This year, Sanya's cruise market has shown a strong recovery. According to the Sanya Maritime Safety Administration, among travelers visiting Sanya during the Spring Festival holiday from Jan 7 to Feb 15, there were more than 16,000 cruise passengers, a year-on-year increase of 25.24 percent.

Sanya will join hands with neighboring cities and the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions to explore multi-destination cruise tour products to share resources, construct a whole chain for the cruise industry and develop cruise-based industrial clusters, according to the Sanya Tourism Promotion Board.

With such efforts, China's cruise tourism sector is expected to gain more traction.

Chen Yin, president of China Tourism Group, revealed earlier this month that China Travel Cruises, a subsidiary of the group, has joined hands with COSCO Shipping Group and China Communications Construction Co to resume the *Nanhai Dream* cruise ship sailing for the Xisha Islands in the South China Sea.

"Promoting the in-depth integration of transportation and tourism and enriching the products of the Xisha passenger liners can better serve the construction of the Hainan Free Trade Port," said Wang Xianjin, vice-president and chief engineer of the China Academy of Transportation Sciences, which is affiliated with the Ministry of Transport.

Hu Defang, chairman of Bohai Shipyard Group Co, said he believes that the future of China's international cruise tourism industry is promising.

"More international cruise routes should be established as soon as possible to improve the supply capacity and service level of cruise tourism products and form a diverse cruise tourism consumption that combines the Yangtze River, China's coastal areas and transnational waters," Hu said.

Shunde to shine with smart jewelry center

By QIU QUANLIN
in Foshan, Guangdong
qiuquanlin@chinadaily.com.cn

Construction of an ecological gold and jewelry center focusing on intelligent manufacturing in Shunde district of Foshan, Guangdong province, will help introduce more global investors to the district, a local Party official said.

The first phase of the gold and jewelry center, with an investment of 30 billion yuan ($4.34 billion), kicked off construction recently in Shunde. It aims at building a gold and jewelry industrial cluster with a market scale of more than 100 billion yuan.

The project, jointly invested by leading Chinese gold and jewelry companies of Kinghood Group, Shenzhen Liufu Jewelry Culture Industry Co and Zhou Liu Fu Jewelry Co, will become an intelligent and digital gold and jewelry manufacturing center, the local government said.

Currently, imports of rough diamonds for processing in Shunde account for some 70 percent of the country's total, according to the local government.

The project, with a construction area of about 2.6 million square meters, will apply cutting-edge technologies and smart robots to promote high-quality and high-level automatic manufacturing.

"Leveraging digital solutions, the center will also help optimize the entire production chain, upstream raw material supply chain, research and design and smart retailing of gold and jewelry," said Liu Zhiyong, Party secretary of Shunde.

The local government has issued a series of preferential policies, including a supportive fund of 50 million yuan each year, to help boost the development of the gold and jewelry industry, Liu said.

Among companies that have agreed to launch projects in the center, Shenzhen Shunyi Jewelry Co Ltd said it will soon apply several advanced technologies and automatic precision manufacturing instruments in its workshop.

"Our workshop in the center is expected to attract more talent specialized in the gold and jewelry industry of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and help accelerate digitalization and intelligence for the entire industry," said Guo Lichun, chairman of the company.

In addition, the center will also introduce a number of leading international gold and jewelry brands, luxury hotels, shopping malls, grade-A office buildings and research, educational and health institutions, to make it a flagship project integrating the elements of various industries.

Prior to the construction, the local government signed cooperative agreements with 28 financial, testing and research organizations and gold and jewelry companies from the GBA.

Citing the gold and jewelry industry's role in promoting domestic consumption, Xiang Songzuo, a market insider, said the ecological center will help greatly boost local economic development.

"Based on its strong manufacturing strength, the gold and jewelry industry, which is one of the five strategic pillar industries in Foshan, is expected to become a new growth engine for the local economy," Xiang said.

A training base providing services such as talent training and skill identification will be established in the center, said Xu Jun, vice-chairman of the Young Entrepreneurs Committee of the China Jewelry and Jade Industry Association.

"In the process of upgrading the gold and jewelry industry amid the rapid improvement of digital intelligence, developing talent is particularly important," Xu said.

Famed Chinese ophthalmologist realizing fruits of more than three decades' labor

By TANG ZHIHAO
tangzhihao@chinadaily.com.cn

Yao Ke, president of Zhejiang University Eye Hospital, operates eye medical equipment at the hospital. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

When Yao Ke, chief of the Eye Center of the Second Affiliated Hospital of Zhejiang University School of Medicine and Zhejiang University Eye Hospital, who is also the president of the Chinese Ophthalmological Society, studied in the United States and Switzerland in the 1980s, he was "shocked" by the significant technical gap in cataract surgery between China and the two countries.

According to Yao, at that time, phacoemulsification, a technique in which an ultrasonic device is used to break up and then remove a clouded lens, had been developed as an upgrade to extracapsular cataract extraction, or ECCE, for treating cataract. With the technique, ophthalmologists in the US and Switzerland could remove lens with a tiny needle in just 10 minutes. In comparison, Chinese ophthalmologists just began to use ECCE which has a bigger incision.

"I always thought how the situation could be changed and when those technologies could be applied in China," said Yao.

In 1990, Yao returned to China after completing his post-doctoral research in Switzerland. He gave up a well-paid position and excellent research environment in Switzerland because "China needs ophthalmologists" and his "future is in China".

He also made three wishes — promoting scientific development in China, setting up a mobile eye hospital to benefit more patients, and establishing a modern eye hospital.

Pioneer scientific development

Over the last more than 30 years, Yao has been committed to introducing cutting-edge technologies in China to serve the varying vision demands of patients.

He practiced many "firsts" and continuously inspires the entire ophthalmology sector in the country.

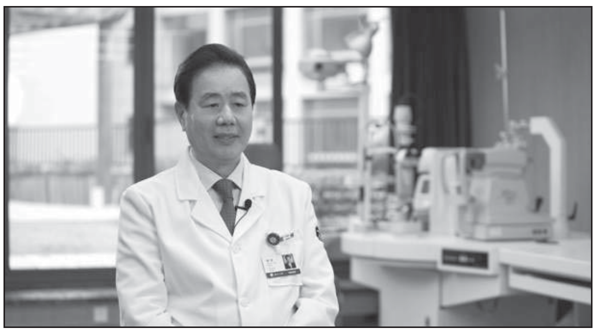
In 1990, he purchased and donated a fully automatic perimeter, the first of its kind in China, to his alma mater, Zhejiang Medical University.

In 1992, he carried out the first phacoemulsification cataract surgery in China, marking a milestone in cataract treatment.

Since 2013, he has been leading his team to perform femtosecond laser-assisted cataract surgery, also known as FLACS, to improve safety, efficiency and accuracy. Now, China has become one of the leading countries in applying this advanced technology in terms of the number of operations. In 2022, despite the pandemic, the Eye Center of the Second Affiliated Hospital of Zhejiang University School of Medicine performed more than 5,200 FLACS, ranking the first in the world.

"Never be conservative. I always believe that keeping a curious mindset and a wish to explore new matters are keys to be a pioneer, a scholar and a doctor who can bring real benefits to patients," Yao said. "I have a belief that there is no best, just better."

In recent years, Yao has also paid greater attention to refractive cataract surgery and stem cells in response to the "high-quality vision" demand of patients.



Yao Ke, chief of the Eye Center of the Second Affiliated Hospital of Zhejiang University School of Medicine and Zhejiang University Eye Hospital.

According to statistics from the Chinese Ophthalmological Society, about 80 percent of senior Chinese people aged above 60 are affected by cataract, presbyopia or both. Because of the increasing life expectancy and living quality, the needs of patients have evolved from "have sight" to "have clarity from distance to intermediate to near, and day and night" in the last 10 years. On March 9, Yao implanted the latest intraocular lens, TECNIS Synergy™ IOL (NMPA Certificated No. 20223160617), developed by Johnson & Johnson Surgical Vision, which could offer a wide range of continuous vision and a near vision as short as 33 centimeters, into eyes of a woman aged 60, marking the debut of the new product in China. The implantation could satisfy the woman's needs from moment to moment, for example, using digital devices, participating in stock exchange and driving, according to Yao.

According to Johnson & Johnson Surgical Vision, the new product was displayed at the fifth China International Import Expo in November and obtained approval from the National Medical Products Administration in December. The introduction of the intraocular lens will support the quality development of ophthalmology in China.

Bringing hope to more patients

Yao, one of four siblings to follow his father's career path as an ophthalmologist, devotes himself to helping more cataract-affected patients, regardless their fortune and status.

Inspired from the Orbis, a charitable international flying eye hospital, Yao established a mobile hospital named Eye Hospital On-wheel in 1996 to provide free cataract surgeries to patients in poverty areas.

Over the last 27 years, the mobile hospital, the first of its kind in China, has traveled more than 600,000 kilometers. More than 10,000 cataract patients in China including the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region and the Tibet autonomous region received treatments, and more than 100,000 people enjoyed free clinical services.

The mobile hospital also helps to train local ophthalmology professionals so patients could get treatment more conveniently.

"Give a man fish, he will have a meal; teach him to fish, he will have food all his life," said Yao.

"The program also gives young talent chances to experience a poor life which they could never imagine. It helps to cultivate hard working spirit among young doctors," Yao added.

In December 2021, led by Yao, the Zhejiang University Eye Hospital in Hangzhou of Zhejiang province, one of the biggest eye-specialized hospitals in China, began operation. In 2022, the hospital received nearly 900,000 patients and performed 113,000 operations including 27,000 cataract surgeries. The third wish of Yao turned into reality.

During the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), China is set to increase the cataract surgical rate, or CSR, measuring the number of procedures per million people, to 3,500 to help more people regain vision. Yao is still exploring new areas and is keen to contribute to the development of ophthalmology in China.

"As a doctor, on one hand, I will strive to help patients to prevent blindness, as it was required by the 14th Five-Year Plan; on the other hand, I will give patients choices for quality vision by keeping curious about the latest technologies," Yao said.

Yao is still guiding university students and would like to share his ideas and findings on ophthalmology.

He said China's top medical scientists must not only shoulder the progress of science and technology, but also devote themselves to the progress of society, country and humanity.

"We must promote teamwork rather than work alone," he said. "The future of China's ophthalmology belongs to young people and we must guide them well."

ADVERTORIAL

BUSINESSFOCUS

Smart agriculture boosts vitality in Zhejiang

Big data, cloud computing, internet create 'planting brain', supporting modernization, lower costs, higher labor efficiency

By MA ZHENHUAN in Hangzhou
mazhenhuan@chinadaily.com.cn

An employee moves a needle-free innoculation robot used for a smart pig farm in Wuzhen township, Zhejiang province, in November. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

More cutting-edge technologies have been deployed in agricultural production and smart farm management, promoting advanced agricultural and rural modernization in China.

Among the smart farms in China, one agricultural farm located in Haishu district of Ningbo in East China's Zhejiang province has expanded its footprint by deeply integrating modern technology such as big data, cloud computing and the internet, with traditional agriculture.

"The basic conditions of agriculture in Haishu district are all displayed on the screen in Haishu Future Farm. It presents the variety of seedlings, the real-time situation in the seedling room, the total number of rice plants and the planting conditions in various townships," Lin Jiawei told China Daily.

Lin is an agricultural technician who is responsible for equipment management and data operations at Haishu Future Farm.

Lin explained that the whole system is called a "planting brain", which integrates water and fertilizer, precision planting, nutrient management, pest control, agricultural regulation and monitoring and precision harvesting, largely enhancing agricultural production efficiency.

Haishu Future Farm, originally called the high-quality and high-efficiency rice planting field of digital agricultural technology integration demonstration project, is located in the modern ecological agriculture comprehensive area of Mijiaopian, Gulin township, Haishu district.

"The project aims to accelerate the process of transforming traditional agriculture into modern agriculture, combining agricultural machinery, rice conditions and irrigation with the internet, remote sensing drones and unmanned driving," said Lin.

Located in the western suburbs of Ningbo, Gulin township is a typical water town south of the Yangtze River. In 2017, it was the only digital agriculture planting field project in East China as one of the pilot projects of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

The project was completed from 2017 to 2022 and was upgraded and renamed Haishu Future Farm in the second half of 2022.

The total construction area of the entire project reaches 7.27 square kilometers and is expected to be completed next month.

"Originally, the project was only aimed at rice cultivation. Now, it expands to almost the whole agricultural industry in Haishu district, including farmlands, orchards and family farms," Lin told China Daily.

"In addition, Haishu Future Farm puts much effort into integrating production, education and research. It also combines agriculture and tourism, attracting many tourists and bringing vitality to the rural economy," said Lin.

"After its completion, it will form a complete high-quality, efficient and precise rice planting technology system and establish a sustainable development operation mechanism. Labor costs of the project area are expected to be reduced by 10 percent, water will be conserved by 10 percent and fertilizer use will be cut by 8 percent," said Lin.

Strawberry growers promote online sales through livestreaming at a greenhouse in Huzhou, Zhejiang province, on March 3. TAN YUNFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Besides promoting digital agricultural technology, it enhances the work efficiency of farmers.

Xu Yuejin, a 66-year-old grain farmer, has witnessed the technological advancement of agriculture, as he is now used to using not just primitive hoes, but tractors and drones.

He is responsible for the project's rice planting. His unmanned rice transplanter is equipped with a driverless information system, which can realize automatic rice transplanting and unmanned operations through the internet and Beidou satellite navigation system.

"I have been farming for most of my life and now I can save a lot of labor costs by using unmanned machinery," said Xu.

Xu added that in addition to automatic farming, the base can also realize automatic irrigation, which can save 10 percent of labor costs per year, and save more water while increasing production capacity.

Haishu Future Farm has also built a seedling-raising center, introducing the most advanced seedling-raising equipment across the country. It stresses competitiveness that enables the district to not only meet the needs of its people, but also lead national agricultural development.

In July last year, the Central Cyberspace Administration of China and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs jointly held the country's first on-site promotion meeting for digital rural construction in the province, promising to build Zhejiang as the nation's first digital rural area.

Last month, they signed an official cooperation agreement to jointly build a digital rural leading area in Zhejiang, marking the construction of the country's first leading digital village area.

Zhejiang will put more energy into the construction of digital villages in the next few years and strive to build 1,000 digital agricultural factories, 100 future farms and 1,000 rural demonstration villages across the province by 2027.

It is estimated to generate 180 billion yuan ($26.1 billion) in agricultural product retail sales online.

Zhejiang will further accelerate the speed of agricultural and rural digital reform, including industry digital efficiency enhancement, digital service quality improvement, cultural revitalization, governance ability and digital infrastructure improvement in rural areas.

In terms of industrial efficiency, Zhejiang will begin implementing smart agricultural projects, deepen the construction of agricultural industry smart brains and comprehensively integrate industrial, supply, capital and innovation chains.

It will also accelerate the construction of digital agricultural factories and future farms, actively cultivate village livestreaming businesses and seek other new forms of agricultural and rural business.

In addition, Zhejiang will speed up the construction of 5G base stations in rural areas and promote the digital transformation of farmland, water conservancy, road building and cold chain logistics.

Specific measures taken to promote digital villages

By MA ZHENHUAN in Hangzhou

As a pioneer of the digital economy, Zhejiang province has maintained its position at the forefront of the country in the construction of digital villages.

The development level of digital agriculture and rural areas in Zhejiang had reached 68.3 percent, ranking first in the country for four consecutive years, said the China Digital Rural Development Report (2022), which was jointly compiled by the Cyberspace Administration of China and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

Besides the heavy investment in agricultural technology, agriculture in the digital village is arguably an industry that is more than just applying new advances in technology — villagers' lives are central pillars of rural vitalization and the digital village's development.

During a conference last month, Wang Tonglin, director of the Zhejiang Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, said that the local Zhejiang government has made efforts toward digital healthcare and digital education in villages.

"For example, at the smart living center, villagers can conduct health self-tests, remote consultations with doctors and consult on agricultural technology, policies and regulations online in Wusi village of Deqing county in Huzhou. The smart living center can also offer daily services such as paying phone bills and insurance, and depositing and withdrawing money," said Wang.

Many efforts will be taken to boost sales of local agricultural products across the province. Home to China's leading e-commerce and internet companies such as Alibaba, Zhejiang is one of the most vibrant places for digital trade and the digital economy.

"We will further promote agricultural products in villages through e-commerce, continue to carry out brand recommendations, online and offline agricultural festival activities and develop live broadcasts for e-commerce and cross-border e-commerce in rural areas, to effectively expand the online sales channels of agricultural products," said Wang.

To seize the opportunities presented by digital technologies, farmers can make significant contributions in this regard.

To encourage farmers to actively develop smart agriculture by learning the new generation of information technology, the government will cooperate with universities to provide farmers with necessary digital information, know-how and knowledge, said Xu Qing, deputy director of the Internet Information Office of the Zhejiang Provincial Party Committee, during a press conference.

"Besides, digital infrastructure plays an important role in the cultivation and improvement of farmers' digital literacy. In this regard, it is necessary to further promote the construction of smart infrastructure, digital transformation and upgrading of traditional infrastructure," Xu added.

More efforts will be made to upgrade the cultural infrastructure at the grassroots level to balance the development of cultural services between rural and urban areas.

Zhejiang will promote coordinated and sustainable cultural development in rural areas by constructing more cultural and creative bases, developing homestays and farmhouses, and promoting the integration between agriculture, culture, tourism and sports.

These measures not only promote the national rural vitalization strategy, but also stimulate traditional cultural preservation and boost the vitality of the cultural industry, thus increasing the incomes of local villagers and promoting common prosperity.

Over the next few years, digitalization will greatly shape the direction of the rural agricultural industry. Zhejiang shows that it is already well on its way.

Villagers use drones to spread fertilizer over a wheat field in Huzhou, Zhejiang province, in February. WANG ZHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

LIFE

Left: Yang Chi's teacher, the late Yuan Shihai (right), a noted Peking Opera master, applies makeup to Yang in 1994. **Right:** Yang (first from right) instructs performers at a national training class on the genre of the Yuan school of Peking Opera in August 2017.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

PEKING OPERA'S LEADING VOICE

Director and star of the traditional genre passes on tips to bring in a new generation, **Zhang Xiaomin** reports in Dalian, Liaoning.

'Well done! But don't sing too high here," says director Yang Chi of Dalian Peking Opera Theater. The instructions seem to echo around the ornate theater where the director often goes to see rehearsals and gives young actors guidance on appearance, gesture, eye expression, speech and emotion.

Yang, 62, a well-known Peking Opera performer, has been engaged in the art since 1972, when he was admitted to the Peking Opera class of an art school in Dalian, Liaoning province.

"Peking Opera is the quintessence of Chinese culture. It shows the special charm of Eastern aesthetics in its singing, acting, recitation, acrobatics and dancing," says Yang, who has pocketed almost all the highest awards for opera in China.

According to Yang, people can see the traces of many kinds of traditional Chinese operas in Peking Opera, which is the epitome of Chinese operas, even though it is only over 200 years old. Yang was trained to play *laosheng*, the elderly male role. He laid a solid foundation for both high-quality singing and martial arts skills.

Later, in the late '80s, he switched to play *hualian*, painted-face characters, and won a reputation for his loud and profound voice, beautiful posture and all-around qualities.

He has performed in more than 20 countries and regions, including the United States, Britain, France, and Germany.

"As an old Chinese saying goes, 'A minute on the stage takes 10 years of practice.' Without hard practice, one can never become a good Peking Opera actor," says Yang.

"Practice makes perfect. It is common to practice a movement 100 times. The headstand, which lasts 20 to 30 minutes at a time, is also a compulsory course for us," he says, adding that young actors today generally lack the fortitude to bear such hardships.

Nowadays, people have more channels to get information and have more hobbies. Fewer people have the inclination to either learn or enjoy Peking Opera.

Yang admits that he has been worried about the lack of successors.

Above: Yang Chi (left) plays the role of Lian Po, a famous general of the Warring States Period (475-221 BC).
Below left: Yang in the costume of Xiang Yu, a prominent warlord of the late Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC).

"The key to the prosperity of Peking Opera lies in people. It needs to be carried forward and promoted by generations. However, such problems as poor financing and low pay still beset its development," he says.

He had heard that, in order to earn more, some young actors in other traditional opera troupes are doing part-time jobs as deliverymen, while others work as barmen after hours.

"Under such circumstances, it is impossible for our young players to put more energy into training, and the problem becomes even worse that there will be no followers," he says.

Yang communicated with many art troupes and young actors and conducted in-depth research and reflection on such problems.

During this year's annual sessions of the National People's Congress and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Yang, an NPC deputy, suggested improving salaries for Chinese opera performers, increasing funding and support for classic and traditional operas, and promoting exchanges and performances of fine works across the country.

"Peking Opera is a 'living' art, whose artistic value exists in every artist," Yang says, adding that he hopes that, through his efforts, both famous actors and ordinary practitioners can gain a wider recognition of the value of the profession.

"A masterpiece by a famous painter might be worth more 100 years later. But for Peking Opera masters, it is a different story," he says.

When Yang was 21, he got the chance to learn from noted artist Yuan Shihai, who drew on the strengths of other masters and formed his own style of performing art named the "Yuan school".

Yang still vividly remembers the first time Yuan taught him how to play a scene, and then he went to enjoy the master's performance on stage.

"When he appeared on stage, I was dumbfounded. It was like a high school student finding out that he just got tutored by a Nobel Prize winner," says Yang. "It was at that moment, when I saw it with my own eyes, that I knew what 'good performance' meant."

Yang says even though he learned a lot from Yuan, he can only carry on a small part of Yuan's talent. After the teacher's death in 2002, the authentic "Yuan school" art ceased to exist.

That is why Yang always stresses that people are the most important resource for the inheritance of Peking Opera.

According to the report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China held last year, China will build cultural confidence and strength and secure new successes in developing socialist culture.

"To carry forward the quintessence of Peking Opera and revitalize traditional culture is a reflection of cultural confidence," says Yang, adding that the opera is like an encyclopedia of traditional Chinese culture.

"Its melody, singing, dancing, makeup and costumes all embody the unique charm of Chinese art."

Yang has been working as director of the Dalian Peking Opera Theater since 2000.

Today, both Yang and the theater have become a calling card for the port city in Northeast China.

Over the years, apart from daily rehearsals, performances and exchanges, the troupe has also undertaken the task of bringing Peking Opera to schools, islands and residential communities.

Yang believes that their work has achieved good results.

"The audience in the theater used to be all old people, but now there are many young faces. Some college students have even become fans of our Peking Opera performers," he says.

"There are also parents bringing their children to the theater. I've found that it's easy to get kids to like the art form if they can just sit down and enjoy for a while."

Yang's approach to the art form was inspired by his father, a fan of Peking Opera.

"When I was a little boy, I liked playing outside with other kids. Once I heard Peking Opera playing on the radio, I immediately stopped playing and ran home to listen to it," Yang recalls.

He also feels grateful that he benefited from meeting a good, enlightening teacher, Liu Jinchang, when he started learning the opera.

"I was only 11. Sometimes I could not understand why he was so strict. When I grew up, I realized that it was because of that, I had laid a solid foundation."

Yang says the theater plans to set up training courses for kids, teaching them the basic skills of Peking Opera and encouraging their energy and spirit with traditional Chinese culture.

Contact the writer at zhangxiaomin@chinadaily.com.cn

"Peking Opera is the quintessence of Chinese culture. It shows the special charm of Eastern aesthetics in its singing, acting, recitation, acrobatics and dancing."

Yang Chi, Peking Opera performer

China's 'golden girl' recalls bumpy road to Olympic glory

By YANG YANG
yangyangs@chinadaily.com.cn

"Milano Cortina 2026 might be my last Winter Olympics. Whatever the result will be, I have only one goal, that is to transcend my previous results," said freestyle skiing aerials Olympic champion Xu Mengtao, 33, at the 35th Beijing Book Fair.

The fair offered an opportunity for the athlete to meet readers of her autobiography *Mingyun Fanzhuan* (Fortune Flips).

Xu was born in Northeast China's Anshan city, Liaoning province, in 1990. Her parents ran a barbecue restaurant, where Xu would help out during holidays. She started her sports career at the tender age of 4 as a gymnast, before switching disciplines to freestyle skiing aerials at 12 years old, when she became considered too tall to continue gymnastics.

To date, Xu has won 55 freestyle skiing aerials championships, according to the International Ski Federation, including the gold she won in Beijing last year, at the age of 32, but they came at a cost.

She has endured four operations on her knees, with more than 60 percent of the cartilage of the left knee removed. When she took part in the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympics, there were steel pins in her knees. Like Vancouver in 2010 and Sochi in 2014, she aspired to clinch an Olympic gold medal. Xu, unfortunately, fell short, despite being in peak condition.

But failures, painful injuries and lonely months of recovery did not diminish her perseverance and determination to win an Olympic title.

Xu finally realized her dream in Beijing, on Feb 14, 2022, by completing three somersaults on her final jump, the most difficult maneuver in the event.

It was hard to hold back tears watching Xu on the TV shouting "Did I win? Did I win?" as her score came out. Millions of viewers around the world shared the moment with her.

Xu Mengtao (second from left) speaks at an event held during the 35th Beijing Book Fair, introducing her autobiography, *Mingyun Fanzhuan* (Fortune Flips). YANG YANG / CHINA DAILY

In *Mingyun Fanzhuan*, Xu contemplatively records her true feelings about her life over the past 30 years, her memories of heart-stopping international competition, her medal tally, her dreams, the low points in her athletic life that she managed to overcome, the injuries and suffering, as well as the moments of glory.

She writes that she had created 406 tactical tables in the past 20 years to help her win.

To handle different situations caused by changing weather in just one Winter Olympics, she made five plans.

"Calculating each jump, reviewing each problem and analyzing each possibility is how I handle the uncertainty. The real situation is unpredictable, so I have to be fully prepared to march toward success," she writes in the book.

With 140,000 words and 67 photos, *Mingyun Fanzhuan* represents the fight and perseverance of everyone who is on a journey to flip their fortune. Since its launch in early January, more than 10,000 copies of the book have been sold. At the Beijing Book Fair, China National Publications Import and Export Group signed a contract with the publishers to release translated versions in the future.

"Although I am just one individual, through my experience people can see the development process of freestyle skiing aerials in China. Maybe my personal experience can inspire and encourage more people to pursue their dreams," Xu said at the book launch event in January.

"Don't stop trying. It's hard to tell when your efforts will pay off, but it will be surely at the most crucial moment," Xu said in a TV interview.

Online
Watch the video by scanning the code.

LIFESHANGHAI

Zhang Xiaogang's first solo show in the city is inspired by mayflies and delves deep into the painter's psyche, **Zhang Kun** reports.

EXHIBITION IS PICTURE OF SUCCESS

Top: *Zhang Xiaogang: Mayflies* — the artist's first solo exhibition in Shanghai, which is set to run through May 7 — features more than 80 artworks, including (from left) *Light No 7*, *Mayfly Diary: May 8, 2022* and *Light No 6*. **Above:** Zhang works on his *Stage No 5: Kale* at his studio in Beijing. **Below:** A poster of the exhibition. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

One of the prominent Chinese artists of the contemporary scene, Zhang Xiaogang is presenting his first solo exhibition in Shanghai.

Zhang Xiaogang: Mayflies, from March 4 to May 7, at the Long Museum West Bund, marks the first public solo show of Zhang's creations in the past three years.

More than 80 artworks, including oil paintings on paper and on canvas, installation and sketches, are on display.

In Chinese literature, the mayfly is often associated with philosophical ideas about the transience and insignificance of human existence, as the tiny creatures are known for their extremely short life span and large clusters in summer.

In the past three years, Zhang spent more time at home than ever before due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and created the *Mayfly Diary* series of paintings on paper, depicting surrealistic and dramatic scenes in closed household spaces, such as the bathroom and bedroom.

The series of paintings are like "comic strips that recorded my feelings and thoughts about a lot of things," Zhang said at the exhibition's opening on March 4. He began to paint on paper in 2018, when preparing for a solo exhibition in New York. As a creative medium, paper made him feel intimate and relaxed. Also, he says, paper is versatile, you can tear it up, soak it in water and shape it into collage.

He chose it to express his fragmented ideas, and reflection on the flow of time.

Zhang, being an indispensable figure in contemporary art history, has created an imagery world of his own, says Li Jia, curator of the exhibition. Her intention was to build a channel that helps audiences to enter the artist's world, and hopefully find strength and consolation in art.

On exhibition are a series of 16 sketches entitled *The Ghost Between Black and White*, which Zhang created in 1984 when he was ill and hospitalized.

The nightmarish imagery inspired by his experience in the hospital at that time was in "parallel with the *Mayfly* series, although they are almost 40 years apart," says Wang Wei, founding director of the Long Museum. "They are an interior monologue in response to similar experiences in the artist's life, like an echo from the distant beginning of his creative path."

Born in Kunming, Southwest China's Yunnan province, in 1958, Zhang graduated from the Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts in 1982. His early paintings showed influences from German expressionism and surrealism, and in the early 1990s, inspired by a family photograph at his parents' house, he began to paint the series known as *Bloodlines — Big Family*.

These monochromatic and stylized portraits of Chinese families, reminiscent of old family photos in almost every Chinese household through the latter half of the 20th century, evoked a wide resonance, and won international recognition, when they were first exhibited at the Sao Paulo Biennial in 1994.

In 2006, at Sotheby's inaugural New York sale of Chinese contemporary art, one of Zhang's paintings of the *Bloodlines — Big Family* series soared to $979,200 from the estimated price of $250,000 to $350,000.

It is said that the sale marked the rise of contemporary Chinese art in the global market, and Zhang has ever since remained a prominent figure at art auctions from home and abroad. On Feb 22, a painting from the same series fetched 12.65 million yuan ($1.83 million) at an event jointly presented by two auction houses Yongle and Phillips.

If you go

Zhang Xiaogang: Mayflies
10 am-5:30 pm, Tuesday-Sunday,
March 4-May 7.
Long Museum West Bund,
3398 Longteng Avenue,
Xuhui district, Shanghai.
021-6422-7636.

While he was happy that his paintings have continuously been well received in the art market, Zhang says the auction price no longer has anything to do with him, because the paintings that are circulated in the market were created more than 10 years ago, and he has moved on.

"At first it felt novel and exciting, but then after years of ups and downs of the market, you would regain the peace of your mind, and go on with your work unaffected," he says.

"You can't possibly turn back to do more *Big Family* paintings just because the art market favored them.

"Artists are always creating for the future. What matters is your work, and how you keep going forward."

Among his later oil paintings, the *Stage* and *Light* series are featured at the exhibition in Shanghai.

While echoing *Mayfly Diary* in terms of content, these two series form a stark contrast from *Mayfly Diary* in terms of size. *Stage: Castle No 3* spreads 6 meters long. It takes on and develops the theme of unreal landscapes explored by Zhang in his work around 2008, according to curator Li.

"Incorporating partial elements from myth, imagination, fiction and reality, the artist has described his role as more akin to that of an architect, attempting to piece together from various components a kind of spaceship, a remote world in which the vastness of epic and the disorder of absurdity coexist to form a response to a well-known modern fable," she says.

Contact the writer at zhangkun@chinadaily.com.cn

Quartet marks 40 years of supreme harmony

By **ZHANG KUN** in Shanghai

The Shanghai Quartet kicked off its 40th birthday celebrations with a concert at the Shanghai Symphony Hall on Sunday.

One of the first chamber groups in China, the quartet, which, in the beginning, consisted of four students from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, was founded in 1983. The group has since then played around 3,000 concerts in 35 countries and regions, and recorded more than 30 albums.

"Never did we think we could have carried on for so many years," says violinist Li Weigang, who is one of the founding members of the group along with his elder brother Li Honggang. The other two current members are cellist Nicolas Tzavaras from the United States, who has been with the group for 25 years, and Chinese violinist Yu Xiang, who joined the group in 2021.

Back in the 1980s, chamber music was rarely performed in China, and it was the former Ministry of Culture that suggested the country's leading music conservatories set up student chamber groups to prepare for an international competition that was to be held in 1985 in Portsmouth in the United Kingdom.

"We thought we would travel abroad, have the competition and that would be it," Li Weigang recalls. "But the jury and a music teacher were so impressed by our performance that they said it would be a pity if we disbanded after the competition."

The quartet later applied for scholarships and went on to study in the US before embarking on a long performing career and becoming one of the most renowned chamber ensembles in the world.

While the Li brothers remain as the core of the ensemble, cellist Tzavaras has been in the ensemble longer than any other musician.

Although the quartet bears the name of its home city in China, Tzavaras says, "We are in reality an international group with Chinese cultural heritage, and American and European influences".

The combination of cultures and the drawing of inspiration from both the East and the West have helped the quartet to grow into a unique chamber group appreciated and respected in different parts of the world, he adds.

Yu, the first prizewinner of the 2010 Yehudi Menuhin International Violin Competition, used to play in a student quartet when he attended the middle school attached to the Shanghai Conservatory of Music.

"I am honored to join the Shanghai Quartet, and feel it's part of my duty to let more young people fall in love with chamber music," he says.

Professor Ding Zhinuo, a member of China's first female chamber group, was the coach of the quartet when it prepared for the Portsmouth competition. She attended the rehearsal of the quartet last week and praised the group for their persistence over the last 40 years.

"I hope they will lead China's chamber music to further development and a better future," she says.

The Li brothers were born into a family of musicians in Shanghai. Growing up near today's Shanghai Symphony Hall and the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, they started their music training at a young age as their mother, maternal grandfather and an uncle all used to be members of the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra.

The father had great ambitions for his sons, and especially wanted Li Weigang to attend international competitions and pursue a career as a soloist.

However, once they started to play chamber music, Li Weigang found it more fun than playing solo. "It was more colorful and simply better music," he says.

The brothers later studied four pieces in preparation for the Portsmouth competition, which have become part of their repertoire since. One of the pieces is Beethoven's *String Quartet No 16*.

"We picked that piece because it was short, and we thought it would be easier," Li Weigang says. "But it was in fact one of the most philosophical pieces composed not long before Beethoven died. Beethoven is our favorite composer and we are still playing the piece today, but it has never been easy."

The group has over the years built close ties with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, performing 17 concerts at its venue since the launch of its new concert hall in 2014. In July, the Shanghai Quartet will head to Guangzhou, Guangdong province, where they will hold four concerts and play 13 musical pieces, from classical compositions to newly commissioned pieces by Tan Dun and Zhou Long. In October, the ensemble will kick off their 40th anniversary tour of the country.

Top: The Shanghai Quartet's first four members with their coach Ding Zhinuo (middle). **Above:** The quartet performs at the Shanghai Symphony Hall on Sunday to mark its 40th birthday.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Scenes from *A Doll's House* directed by Wang Huan, which is on at the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre from Friday to Sunday. The center's rendition of the play premiered in 2019.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Ibsen's play still relevant in today's world

By **ZHANG KUN** in Shanghai

It may have been almost a century since *A Doll's House* by Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) sparked heated discussions in China about the role of women in a fast-changing society, but theater director Wang Huan believes the production remains germane in today's context.

"The social reality has changed, but the issues discussed in the play are still highly relevant, from familial roles to ethical values," says Wang, who directed the third round of the play. "I want today's audience to see that it isn't just Nora the heroine, but everyone in the play, who has shackles cast on them."

If you go

A Doll's House
7:30 pm, Friday-Saturday;
2 pm, Sunday.
Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre,
288 Anfu Road, Xuhui district,
Shanghai.
021-6431-4775.

The play is on at the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre from Friday to Sunday. The center's rendition of the play premiered in 2019.

"I want to present the story of all the six characters, and highlight the connections between them," Wang adds. "For example, you might see the character Christine Linde as the independent woman Nora could have become, and notice the difficult situation she is in and the choices she makes."

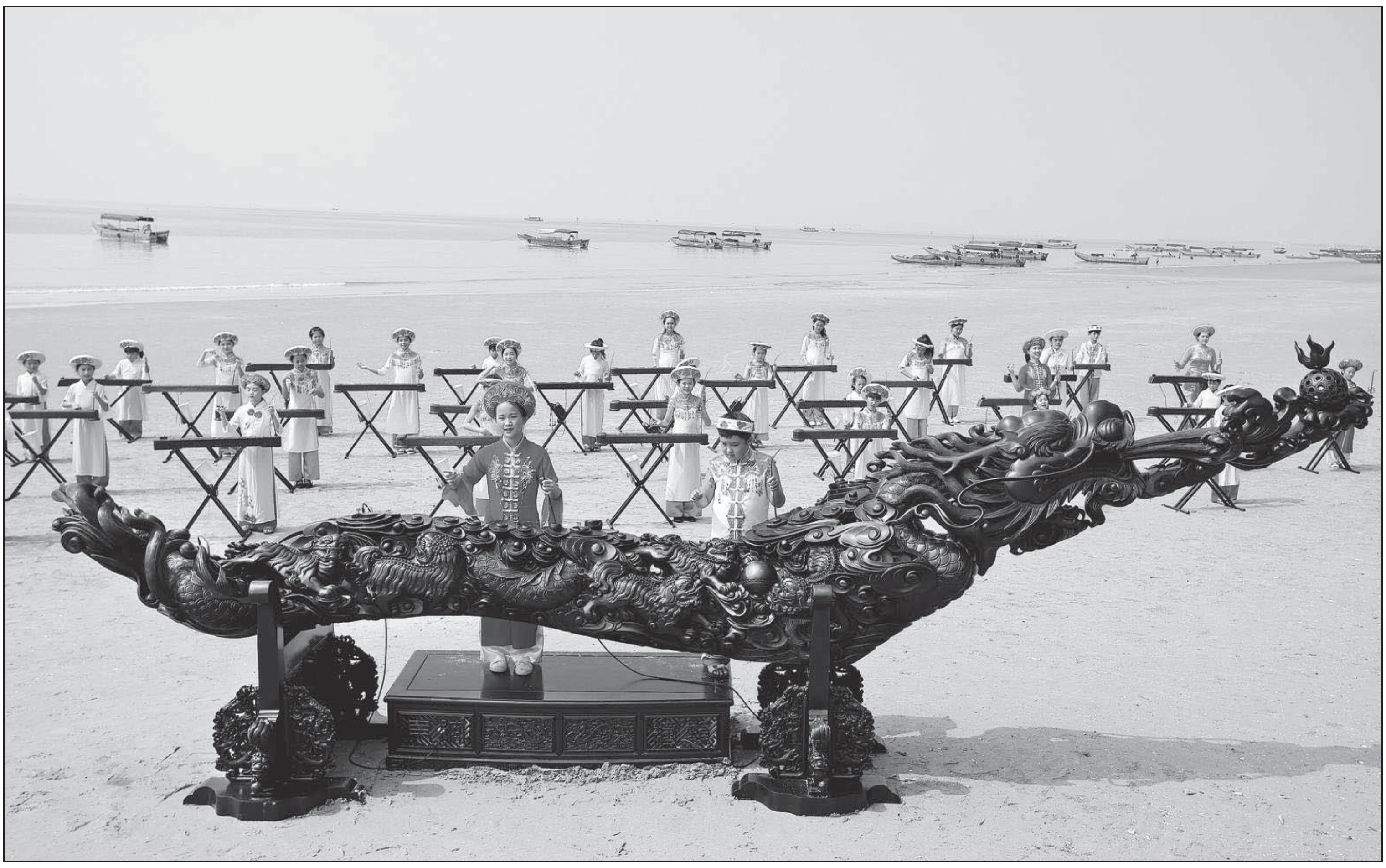
Published in 1879, *A Doll's House* tells the story of Torvald, who sees himself as morally superior to his wife Nora, whom he deems to be an irresponsible, free-spending woman. When a stranger emerges and threatens to expose Nora for a fraud she had committed years ago, Torvald snaps and repudiates her. Nora soon leaves him to live her own life.

The play was first translated and introduced to China in the 1910s. In 2014, the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing premiered its version of the play, which saw its 10th round of shows held last month.

This is the third play Wang has directed since joining the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre in 2014. The director started his training as a visual artist and worked for eight years as a stage designer before leaving to study in the United Kingdom and work at the Royal Shakespeare Company.

"Today, we, Chinese theater practitioners, are capable of presenting quality interpretations of Western theatrical classics and initiating artistic dialogue with colleagues in the global theater scene," he says. "I wish to keep on creating more classical works, and find the connection with today's people."

LIFE



Above: Su Haizhen's students play *duxianqin* on the beach of Wanwei, an island in Dongxing, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, on Nov 18, 2021. **Below:** Su in traditional Jing ethnic clothes showcasing her *duxianqin*. PHOTOS BY HUANG TIANFU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Instrument of diplomacy

The *duxianqin* is not only an essential element of the Jing ethnic group's artistic identity, but can also be used to build a cultural bridge between people, report **Chen Nan** and **Shi Ruipeng** in Nanning.

Duxianqin, or one-string dulcimer, is a traditional musical instrument of the Jing ethnic group. As its name suggests, the old musical instrument — with a history dating to the 8th century — has only one string and is capable of producing two different sounds at the same time.

The performers usually hold the instrument with their left hand and pluck the string with a tiny piece of bamboo with their right. While plucking the instrument's string, the performers simultaneously control the pitch by moving a "wand" which protrudes upward, to adjust the tension on the string.

Su Haizhen grew up listening to the unique musical instrument, which is often performed as an accompaniment to folk songs of the Jing ethnic group and during its traditional folk festivals.

"The sounds of *duxianqin* are similar to the pronunciation of Jing language, which is both soft and produces a strong nasal tone. I always feel close to the musical instrument," says Su.

She started learning to play *duxianqin* at 8 years old. Now, as an inheritor of the musical instrument, which was listed as a part of China's national intangible cultural heritage in 2011, Su is the head of Dongxing Jing Ecomuseum, which is located in Jiangping town, Dongxing, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. Founded in 2008, the ecomuseum is dedicated to preserving and promoting the history and culture of the Jing ethnic group.

Among China's ethnic groups, the Jing people are the only group known for their marine culture, with a small population of about 30,000. The majority of the population live on three islands in Dongxing: Wanwei, Wutou and Shanxin.

"I am captivated by the sounds of the musical instrument. It's amazing that one string can produce such a wide range of melodies, isn't it?" says the 50-year-old, adding that *duxianqin* is an indispensable part of life for the Jing people, who largely live in coastal areas and earn a living by fishing.

"People play the musical instrument as a daily entertainment and on special occasions, such as traditional festivals, weddings and family reunions," she adds.

Su's father, Su Weiguang, was a singer, poet and writer, who was keen on collecting items pertaining to, and doing research about, the culture of the Jing ethnic group. He not only translated old folk songs from the Jing language into Mandarin, but also wrote lots of folk songs himself. Su Haizhen's mother, Ruan Chengzhen, was a dancer, who specialized in performing folk dances of the Jing ethnic group.

> "I am captivated by the sounds of the musical instrument. It's amazing that one string can produce such a wide range of melodies."
>
> **Su Haizhen,** *duxianqin* artist and inheritor of the national intangible cultural heritage

As children, both Su Haizhen and her elder sister, Su Haiying, learned to perform folk songs with their parents. In 1987, Su Haizhen studied at the Art School of Guangxi, majoring in *duxianqin* performance. In 1994, she traveled to Beijing to study at Minzu University of China, where she majored in vocal performance.

"*Duxianqin* is a minority art, with very few people playing it. Back then, there was nobody who could teach the musical instrument at the university," says Su Haizhen. "I want to popularize the musical instrument, which is crucial for both the Jing people and their culture."

As a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Su Haizhen has another important mission besides preserving and promoting *duxianqin*.

Dongxing is a border town adjoining Vietnam. Su Haizhen is also devoted to deepening the friendship and ties between China and its neighbor through *duxianqin*, since the musical instrument is also played in Vietnam.

In 2005, she traveled to Vietnam and studied the musical instrument with established *duxianqin* players there.

"It was a memorable experience because the teachers were very strict and many songs were new to me. I spent about seven hours a day practicing," recalls Su Haizhen.

That year, Su Haizhen recorded and released an album, titled *Hai Yun Mei Ying*, featuring 11 original folk songs played on *duxianqin*, which was the first album in the country dedicated to the musical instrument. In 2007, she released her second album, *Hai Shi Shen Lou*.

Since 2012, Su Haizhen has been teaching young Jing people to play *duxianqin* by working with local schools and she continues to grow appreciation for the instrument by performing on TV shows. She has also founded a *duxianqin* ensemble, which involves about 100 players and plays during the annual traditional *hajie* (singing festival), or the Changha festival for the Jing people.

Contact the writers at chennan@chinadaily.com.cn

Visitors flock to Hainan's first Dongpo festival

HAIKOU — As night falls, a festival featuring Dongpo food culture welcomes an influx of residents and tourists, including many young people, to enjoy the feast of food and culture at a commercial street in Haikou, capital of South China's Hainan province.

Dongpo pork and fish, and other delicacies related to Su Dongpo, a well-known poet of the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127), are mouthwatering, and the poetry recitation of Su's masterpieces is fantastic.

At a food stall decorated with Su's poems about food, Xu Yue, a senior student at Qiongtai Normal University, enjoyed such food and the famous works of Su.

"What I see in these poems is not only the food, but also Su's open-mindedness and heroic attitude toward life in the face of difficulties and adversity," she says.

Xu says Su's poems and spirit, as the precious heritage of China's traditional culture, have had a profound influence on later literati and following generations. "I believe Su's spirit will be better spread in the future, and Chinese culture will pass on more power to us in a new form," she says.

"I've felt a strong cultural atmosphere at this festival," says Wang Wenxi, a sophomore at Hainan Normal University, donning a traditional Chinese costume.

"There are many people around me who like Dongpo culture and traditional Chinese culture. We organize activities during festivals to promote traditional Chinese culture," she says.

As a Chinese cultural icon, Su not only achieved remarkable things in poetry, painting and calligraphy, but was also famed as a gourmet and expert in water conservancy.

Since ancient times, Su's influence is extensive and far-reaching.

> "What I see in these poems is not only the food, but also Su's open-mindedness and heroic attitude toward life in the face of difficulties and adversity."
>
> **Xu Yue,** senior student, Qiongtai Normal University

In 2000, Le Monde, a French newspaper, named the world's 12 heroes who lived around the year 1000, and Su was the only Chinese among them.

Su has a deep bond with Hainan. In his later years, Su was relegated and exiled to Hainan for three years. Su became an important initiator of Hainan's culture and was deeply loved and remembered by people here.

The first Hainan Dongpo Cultural Tourism Festival, which was celebrated on Feb 18, sought to promote Dongpo culture through various activities, including performances, food and a singing competition.

In the singing competition, Liu Tairan, 27, won the award for best original composition. As a director and music producer, Liu says he was Su's big fan and was very happy to have the opportunity to perform his song for more people.

He says Su lived 1,000 years ago, but he is not far away from modern life as he had a temperament suited to this era. "Dongpo and traditional culture give me cultural confidence, and also provide inspiration and materials for my creativity," he says.

Peng Tong, deputy secretary-general of Hainan Su's Research Association, gave a lecture on Dongpo culture at Hainan Normal University last month. Peng says the college students were absorbed in the lecture and were passionate about Su, while welcoming Dongpo culture to the campus.

As a researcher of Dongpo culture, Peng says he is very pleased to see young people engaging with it, as well as with traditional Chinese culture.

"Younger generations need to gain strength and nourishment from traditional Chinese culture," he says, adding that the excellent traditions represented by Dongpo culture appeals to more young people, and will have a profound influence on them.

XINHUA

Modern tech can shrink our ability to unplug

Technology is always something that has intrigued me ever since I was a little boy. I was one of those children who liked to take things apart to see how they worked, much to the frustration of my parents who had no technical inclinations whatsoever.

In the decades since then there have been such remarkable advances in many fields that, if they had been depicted in the 1970s in a TV program predicting the future, many people would have considered them to be too far-fetched.

Ian Morrison
Second Thoughts

One of the greatest advances has been in the miniaturization of technology. Although I was only 4 years old, I will never forget the day in 1977 when my family got its first color television set. It was an absolute beast of a machine, which was about as deep as it was wide.

The cathode ray tube technology of televisions in those days (and ever since the launch of regular daily television broadcasts by the BBC in 1936) meant that, the bigger the screen, the deeper the machine. That's why most people had their TV sets in a corner of the room in those days. In fact, the early TV sets of the 1930s had to have vertically mounted cathode ray tubes, with the picture being shown on a mirror placed over at a 45-degree angle over the screen.

That first color TV set my family had was also an extremely fragile piece of equipment. The job of a television repairman seemed to be quite a prosperous profession in those days, due to the frequency with which TV sets broke down.

Nowadays, TV technology bears virtually no resemblance to what existed in those days. The same can be said for radios, both in terms of size and cost. I recently bought a multiband (FM, medium-wave and shortwave) receiver for less than 25 yuan ($3.59). It can fit in my pocket and I have so far received broadcasts on it from as far afield as Turkiye and Singapore. Compare this to the literally hundreds of pounds my first serious shortwave radio cost in 1988, and it was so heavy that you could literally practice weight training with it.

But where the changes have been the most dramatic has been in the field of computer technology. My family got what was laughably known as a "home computer" in the early 1980s (a Commodore Vic-20). It was basically a glorified games machine with a capacity measured in mere kilobytes, a piece of technological trash. Now we have handheld devices which combine so many features that it's mind-boggling — they are computers, phones, cameras, video cameras, photo albums, clocks, etc.

But does this ease with which we can access all of these features come at a price? I think it does. Maybe it's all far too convenient to access now, and we've reached the point at which many people are simply addicted to this technology. Next time you are among a sizable number of people, such as on public transport, or at a meeting, take a look around and you will see what I mean. So many people are simply transfixed by those small screens.

Yes, small is beautiful, but perhaps bigger is better for some technology in order to prevent us from becoming too over-reliant on it.

Contact the writer at ian@chinadaily.com.cn

SPORTS

BASKETBALL

CBA reinstates embattled Flying Tigers

Xinjiang to return from exile as league attempts to move on from controversy

By SUN XIAOCHEN
sunxiaochen@chinadaily.com.cn

Only two weeks after its shocking withdrawal from the Chinese Basketball Association, the Xinjiang Flying Tigers are set to make an even more surprising return to the league after a CBA board meeting agreed on the club's re-entry.

In the latest development of its feud with the CBA, the Flying Tigers, the league's only franchise based in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, earned a unanimous nod from all league stakeholders to rejoin the 2022-23 regular season, just half a month after quitting the league, citing a controversial penalty imposed by the CBA.

The news broke on Wednesday afternoon, following a social media leak of a league company notification calling an unscheduled stakeholders' meeting to vote for Xinjiang's reinstatement.

"Considering Xinjiang's application to rejoin the league after it had withdrawn its previous decision to quit, we hereby present a proposal of Xinjiang's return to the ongoing season and a solution to address the issues regarding results and league rankings caused by its missed games for all stakeholders to review and decide," read the leaked document, classified as "confidential".

All representatives of the league's other 19 clubs had voted "yes" on Xinjiang's return during the meeting, yet the final decision remains subject to approval by the country's central sports governing body, Beijing Youth Daily reported on Thursday.

Subject to that green light, Xinjiang will return to the league away to the Beijing Ducks at the Wukesong Arena on Friday, almost two months after its last league appearance in January before the holiday break.

The Ducks said on Thursday that game is going ahead, while videos shared on social media showed the Flying Tigers' team bus departing for the airport.

All seven games that Xinjiang had missed during its brief hiatus will be scored as 0-20 losses, according to the proposed solution discussed at the stakeholders' meeting. That would result in Xinjiang slipping nine places to 16th spot in the 20-club league.

Bringing Xinjiang back to the CBA helps "protect the league's collective image while enhancing the cohesion of the entire league organization", according to the leaked document.

The dramatic turnaround came after China's new sports minister, Gao Zhidan, called for greater efforts to revitalize the development of the three big-ball team sports (soccer, basketball and volleyball), especially on the men's side, at the first session of the 14th National People's Congress.

"The professional reform of the management systems for soccer and basketball in our country is in deep water, and faces arduous and formidable challenges that will require consistent efforts, an open mind and innovative approaches to succeed," said Gao, who was appointed director of the General Administration of Sport of China in September.

Zhou in limbo

Xinjiang's league exit was triggered by a CBA punishment announced on Feb 17 to ban the club from signing any new domestic players for a year, due to a violation of league rules reported by star player Zhou Qi.

The club had denied any wrongdoing in its statement announcing the withdrawal. However, the CBA stressed that the Flying Tigers had been operating financially in the name of a new company — as opposed to the original entity registered with the league, thus breaching CBA rules.

Zhou's whistleblowing was the latest episode in his long-term feud with the club, which dates back to a contract dispute in 2021.

After helping the Flying Tigers win the franchise's solitary CBA title in 2017, Zhou joined the NBA's Houston Rockets to start a two-year stint in the United States. However, his attempts to leave Xinjiang for a new CBA club after returning from the States in 2019 was blocked by the Flying Tigers. The club offered Zhou a maximum contract extension which, as per CBA rules, entitled it to retain his services.

Zhou, though, resisted and the ensuing standoff prompted the Team China star to leave for the Australian league, where he has plied his trade for the past two seasons.

If Xinjiang's return is approved, it is expected to keep the same rights to re-sign Zhou should the towering center decide to return to the CBA next season. The stakeholders' meeting did not elaborate on details related to Zhou's dispute with Xinjiang, nor any proposals to change the league rules involved, according to Beijing Youth Daily.

Zhou's resentment at the contract dispute has apparently not dissipated. Responding to a report that the tension between himself and Xinjiang had eased, Zhou wrote on his Weibo account on Wednesday: "No way! Do not even try to smooth it over!"

RUGBY

Fiji's fearless trailblazers winning hearts and minds

Fiji players pose for a selfie after winning bronze in the women's rugby sevens tournament at the Tokyo Olympics on July 31, 2021. AP

Fijiana Drua captain Bitila Tawake (left) and coach Inoke Male pose for the cameras in Sydney. REUTERS

SYDNEY — Bitila Tawake was not even playing rugby four years ago but now she is a bona fide star back home as captain of a Fijiana Drua team that is tearing down barriers for women who want to play the Pacific island nation's favorite sport.

Matching the prop's meteoric rise in the game, the Drua won Australia's elite Super W competition at the first time of asking last year and is now preparing to open its title defense against ACT Brumbies on March 25.

Tawake believes the impact of that debut triumph, coming on the back of a bronze medal for the Fijiana Sevens side at the Olympics in 2021, has been transformative for women's rugby in what is still a socially conservative nation.

"People's minds just started changing," the 23-year-old told a small group of reporters at the launch of the Super W season in Sydney last week.

"After last year's win there has been a lot of recognition from men especially, coming up to us to say, 'oh, good game, you guys did really well, better than the men'.

"It's in our culture that women belong in the kitchen, or belong in the house. They're supposed to be wives bearing children. But now it's kind of changed so we can do both. There's more equality and equity now."

Like most Fijians, the sporty Tawake played backyard rugby as a child but the lack of pathways for girls meant she moved onto netball and then played basketball for her country.

"I never really expected to play rugby, but it's been a dream. Everyone in Fiji has rugby in the blood," she added.

"I joined basketball, I guess I wanted more physicality, and then my friend and my cousin convinced me to play rugby."

Tawake's talent meant she quickly rose to Test level, including playing in all three of Fiji's matches at last year's women's World Cup, but it took a while to win over her family.

"I guess my dad wasn't supportive but now he's a big supporter for women's rugby," she said.

"It took a while for my family to accept that I played rugby. But now they're all big fans. They're my number one fans."

'Kind of crazy'

Tawake's family is not alone and the university student has had to become used to being recognized on the streets back home.

"I just have to hide," she giggled. "At first it was OK, but now it's kind of crazy, because Fiji's pretty small."

That popularity should be evident when the Drua plays its first proper Super W home matches against the Brumbies in Nadi and Melbourne Rebels in Suva after spending all last season on the road because of pandemic travel restrictions.

"We are expecting a huge turnout, especially for the second game when there's a doubleheader with the boys. It's going to be huge, exciting," Tawake added.

Last year's success means the Drua will go into the new season as favorite rather than underdog but Tawake said there would be no compromise on playing with the traditional Fijian mix of power and flair.

"I guess we're just sticking to Fijian rugby because that's who we are. That's what makes our kind of rugby exciting," she said.

"The main aim that we had last year was just not making up the numbers but to win. And that's the same aim we have for this year, not just making up the numbers but to win and make the finals again."

With the help of funding from the Australian government, the rugby pathways that Tawake might have taken as a teenager have now opened up with an explosion in opportunities for girls.

"We have the 10s, sevens, we have 15s and there's a lot of high-school rugby coming up for women and girls," she said.

"It's been huge, it's been a huge push."

Fiji, ranked 17th in the world, bowed out at the pool stage of its first World Cup last year after heavy losses to fully professional women's rugby superpowers England and France.

The ambitious Tawake is hoping the increased pathways and more regular Tests outside the Pacific region will help turn Fiji into a serious contender by the time she comes to the close of her career at the 2029 tournament in Australia.

"The plan is to finish my degree, get married, have children and probably make the next two World Cups," she said.

REUTERS

Digest

SOCCER

Police return Salah's stolen silver medal

Egyptian police said on Wednesday they have recovered a silver medal which was stolen from the home of Liverpool striker Mo Salah.

The theft took place on March 2 and police were able to identify the two thieves, including a former security guard in the residential complex, the Ministry of Interior added in a statement.

All the stolen goods were seized, which include a silver medal, a number of sports shoes and TV receivers.

A security source confirmed to Reuters that the player referred to in the statement is Salah.

The photo, published by the police on Facebook, showed that the silver medal was for the African Cup of Nations.

Salah finished on the losing side in both the 2017 and 2021 Cup of Nations finals.

Egypt captain Salah, 30, is due to visit his home country next week as he will lead the national team in a doubleheader against Malawi in African Cup of Nations qualifying, a home game on March 24 and the away match four days later.

Salah last week became Liverpool's all-time top scorer in the English Premier League with 129 goals.

Owners stress Arsenal ambition amid reshuffle

Arsenal owner Stan Kroenke told Gunners fans on Wednesday his ambitions for the club would "never waver" as the Premier League leader announced a boardroom reshuffle.

US-based Kroenke and his son, Josh Kroenke, have become co-chairmen, while Tim Lewis becomes the executive vice-chairman.

Stan Kroenke took full control of Arsenal in 2018 through holding company Kroenke Sports and Entertainment, which also owns American football, basketball and ice hockey teams in the Los Angeles Rams, Denver Nuggets and Colorado Avalanche respectively.

"This is a simple evolution as part of us all driving Arsenal forward and further reaffirms our family's longstanding commitment to this great club," Kroenke said in a statement on the club's website.

"Stability in football has never been more important as we move past the pandemic, and we believe this is the perfect time to formalize these roles."

BASKETBALL

Morant handed 8-game ban over gun video

Ja Morant will be back with the Memphis Grizzlies next week, after the NBA handed the All-Star guard an eight-game suspension without pay Wednesday and saying his displaying a firearm at a club in suburban Denver earlier this month was "conduct detrimental to the league".

Morant missed his sixth consecutive game when the Grizzlies played in Miami on Wednesday night. He will miss the next two games — at San Antonio on Friday and home against Golden State on Saturday — then be eligible to return on Monday when Memphis plays Dallas, though he is not expected to play that night.

The games he already missed will count toward the suspension, and Morant will forfeit about $669,000 in salary.

"Ja's conduct was irresponsible, reckless and potentially very dangerous," NBA commissioner Adam Silver said in a statement. "It also has serious consequences given his enormous following and influence, particularly among young fans who look up to him."

Silver met with Morant in New York before announcing the league's decision.

BOXING

Russia, Belarus to compete with flags

Russia and Belarus will compete at the women's world boxing championships with their flags and national symbols after their athletes carried the flags at the opening ceremony of the event in India on Wednesday.

The two national teams are also named with their flags in the official International Boxing Association (IBA) competition list, with 12 Russians entered and six competing athletes from Belarus at the March 15-26 event in New Delhi.

Due to the conflict in Ukraine, athletes from Russia and its neighbor Belarus have been banned from many international competitions since.

In some sports where they are still competing they are doing so without their national flags or anthems.

The IBA, which is headed by Russian businessman Umar Kremlev, lifted sanctions on the two nations last year and is allowing their athletes to compete as usual.

OLYMPICS

Ticket lottery launched for 2024 Paris Games

Paris Olympics organizers kicked off the individual ticketing program on Wednesday for next year's Games, after an initial round of package sales left many buyers feeling frustrated at high costs.

Would-be spectators can sign up now through April 20 for a lottery for millions of tickets for Olympic events, which run July 26-Aug 8, 2024. Those chosen for the draw will be contacted in May to log on and purchase individual tickets.

An initial ticketing lottery in February and March allowed buyers to get packages of tickets, but few people were able to access lower-cost tickets. Buyers were also required to buy packages for multiple sports, to encourage people to attend less-popular events.

Paris 2024 organizers announced last year that there will be 1 million tickets priced at 24 euros ($26) and more than 4 million for less than 50 euros ($53). In all, 10 million tickets for the Olympics and 3.4 million for the Paralympics will be made available on the online platform.

A final ticketing phase will run later this year.

Ticket sales are expected to cover about a third of the overall cost of hosting the Games.

AGENCIES

SPORTS

SOCCER

Benzema points way for Madrid

Frenchman the key for defending champ again after dispatching Liverpool with ease

MADRID — Karim Benzema struck for Real Madrid to clinch a 1-0 win over Liverpool and qualification for the Champions League quarterfinals on Wednesday 6-2 on aggregate.

After the wild last-16, first-leg clash at Anfield in February left Madrid sitting pretty with a three-goal advantage, Liverpool coach Jurgen Klopp said his side only had a one-percent chance of turning the tie around.

Liverpool stemmed the bleeding at the Santiago Bernabeu but never looked like mounting a stirring comeback of the type it managed against Barcelona in 2019, or AC Milan in the 2005 final.

Madrid has now knocked Liverpool out of the Champions League in three consecutive seasons, including beating the Reds in last year's final.

"It was a complicated game but from the start we showed we wanted to go through, and we are in the quarterfinals," Benzema told Movistar.

"Suffering is part of today's football. Everyone wants more, but sometimes you have to suffer in a game — the most important thing is to win and go through."

The 14-time record winner showed the nous to keep Liverpool at arm's length, with defenders Eder Militao and Antonio Rudiger determined to shut out the visitor, along with goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois.

Reigning champion Madrid could have significantly stretched its lead, save for a series of superb stops by Liverpool stopper Alisson Becker and some unusually profligate finishing.

Madrid was lethal in the first leg, with Vinicius Junior and Benzema netting twice each — but neither were as decisive on Wednesday. Yet eventually they combined for Madrid's winner after 78 minutes, with Vinicius slipping as he tried to shoot, but hooking the ball into Benzema's path for a simple tap-in.

Madrid's only worry was seeing its captain limp off after his goal amid an injury-hit season — Benzema said it was only a blow on the shin and Carlo Ancelotti confirmed he would be fit to face Barcelona in the Clasico on Sunday.

"Madrid was in control of the whole game, Ali had to make two sensational saves to keep us in the game," Klopp told reporters. "Madrid was outstanding and that's why the better team went through to the next round."

No magic

Liverpool, deeply inconsistent in this campaign, took heart from its 7-0 thrashing of Manchester United in the Premier League, but could not produce the same magic under the Bernabeu lights.

Klopp started with Diogo Jota alongside his usual attacking trio of Mo Salah, Darwin Nunez and Cody Gakpo, deploying as much firepower as he could to try to mount a comeback.

The first chance of the game fell to Nunez but Courtois thwarted the Uruguayan, who was fed by Salah.

At the other end, Madrid sliced open Liverpool on various occasions, and Alisson made a stunning save to deny Vinicius from point-blank range.

Eduardo Camavinga crashed a long-range effort against the crossbar, with Alisson getting his fingertips to it.

The Brazilian goalkeeper made further saves from Vinicius, Fede Valverde and Benzema as Madrid controlled the game.

Camavinga impressed in midfield and eventually helped create Benzema's goal, with a driven pass forward in the buildup.

"I told him a few small details, like how I know that the two Liverpool centerbacks play open, there's space in the middle, and that's how we scored the goal," explained Benzema.

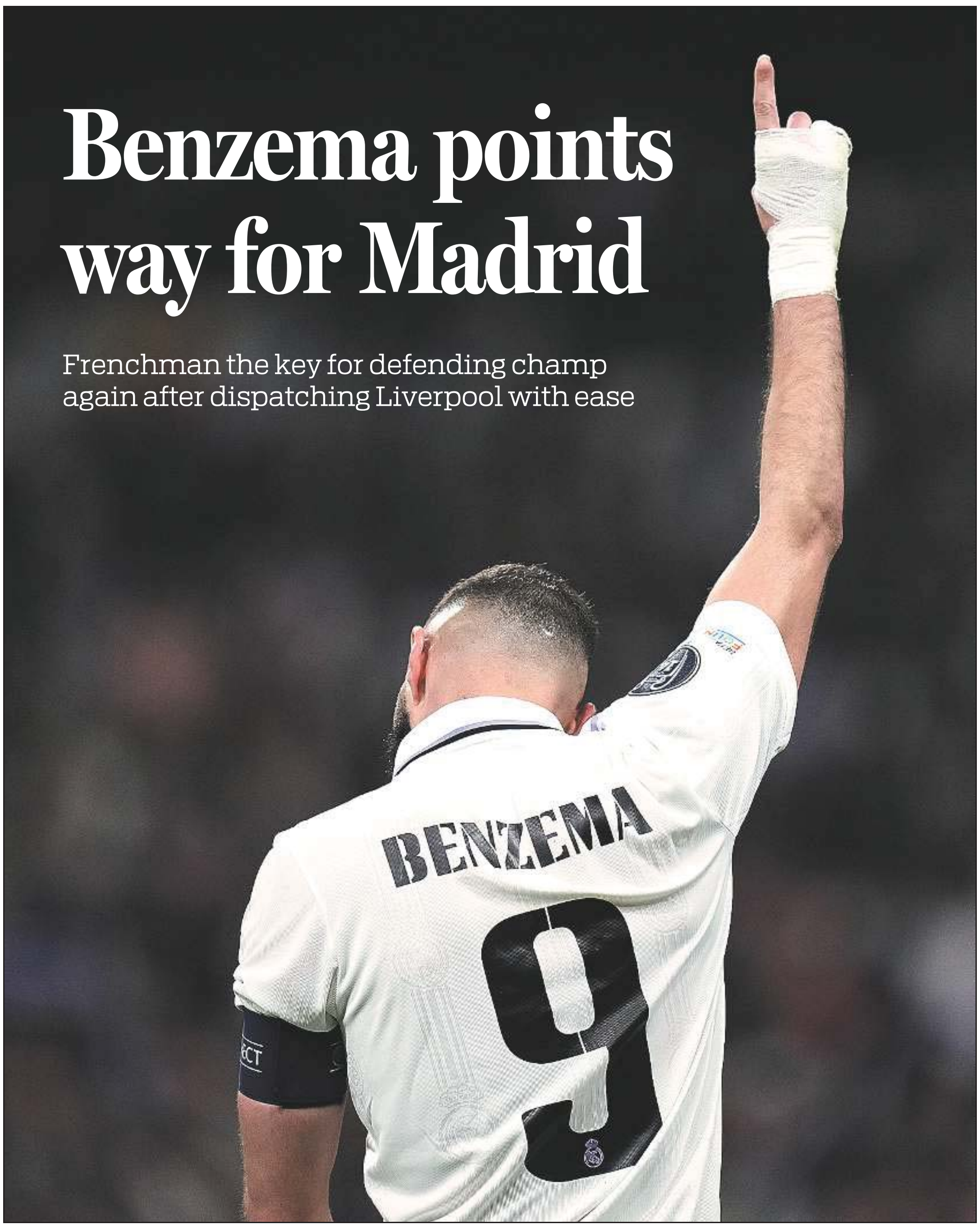
The French striker has now scored seven times in the Champions League against Liverpool, more than any other player, and is key to Madrid's bid to lift the trophy for a sixth time in 10 seasons, if he can stay fit.

Madrid played classic Liverpool anthem *You'll Never Walk Alone* at the end of the game, at once a classy touch but also showing Liverpool never made the host truly uncomfortable.

Klopp's side will now try to salvage its season with a top-four finish in the Premier League to secure a Champions League spot. The Reds are six points behind fourth-placed Tottenham following their 1-0 loss at Bournemouth last Saturday. Liverpool does not play again until its clash with Manchester City after the upcoming international break on April 1.

"When we get back from the international break we have a proper football week ahead of us, with three games, City, Chelsea, Arsenal, which will then probably define what we get out of it," said Klopp.

AFP



Karim Benzema celebrates scoring for Real Madrid during Wednesday's Champions League last-16, second leg against Liverpool at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on Wednesday. Madrid won 1-0 to progress to the quarterfinals 6-2 and ensure last year's beaten finalist Liverpool will end the season trophy-less. AP

Vinicius Junior and Karim Benzema celebrate Real Madrid's goal. AP

'More confident' Real eyes repeat

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said his team was full of confidence after reaching the Champions League quarterfinals on Wednesday.

The record 14-time champion of Europe beat Liverpool 1-0 at the Santiago Bernabeu, 6-2 on aggregate, to progress to the last eight.

Madrid is aiming to win the Champions League for the sixth time in 10 seasons and Ancelotti believes his team's remarkable run to glory last season has given it an extra layer of steel.

Los Blancos pulled off stunning comebacks against Paris Saint-Germain, Chelsea and Manchester City, before beating Liverpool in the final.

Even in the last-16, first-leg clash with Jurgen Klopp's Reds, Madrid fell two goals behind before roaring to a 5-2 win.

"We have a lot more confidence, because of what happened last year, it gave us a lot of confidence," Ancelotti told reporters.

"We saw that in this tie, against a strong team, we did well in the two games.

"But later, with confidence alone, we won't reach the semifinals. We have to play surprising football ... as always, the Champions League is very complicated and we have to compete until the end."

The coach hailed the blend of youth and experience in his squad, with veteran midfielders Luka Modric and Toni Kroos, and youngster Eduardo Camavinga, playing well together against Liverpool.

"The atmosphere is created by the players — the intelligence, humility and patience of the veterans," said Ancelotti.

"The key is the humility of the veterans, they don't have egos, and the patience of the youngsters because in front of them are players who have had fantastic careers and still are.

"Modric and Kroos aren't playing because of the careers they have had, they are playing because they deserve it."

Klopp praised Madrid's mentality in big European games.

"They are used to handling it in the best way, and we will have to see if they can do it again this year," said the Liverpool coach.

"Unfortunately we will have to watch these big games from a distance. I don't know who will win it, to be honest. It will be interesting to watch."

AFP

Electrifying Osimhen sparks Napoli's dreams of Euro glory

NAPLES, Italy — Victor Osimhen says Napoli is dreaming of Champions League glory after his brace shot the Serie A leader to a 3-0 win over Eintracht Frankfurt and into the quarterfinals for the first time in its history on Wednesday.

Nigeria striker Osimhen struck either side of halftime to ensure no slip-ups in Naples and help his team secure a straightforward, and deserved, 5-0 aggregate win.

Piotr Zielinski added Napoli's third from the penalty spot on a perfect night for southern Italy's biggest club, who Osimhen believes can go all the way.

"It's amazing to make history with this win," Osimhen told Amazon Prime.

"We will keep on dreaming, we have the squad to do so (win the Champions League). I think we are on the right path. We have a great coach. We will see what the future holds for us, I think we have a good chance."

Luciano Spalletti's side is close to securing its first Serie A title in over three decades and an already remarkable season got even better with a place in Friday's draw for the last eight of Europe's top club competition.

It has been powered to an almost certain domestic triumph and a deep run in Europe by the red-hot Osimhen, who has now netted 23 times in all competitions for possibly the continent's most exciting team.

However, Spalletti was less bullish about Napoli's chances than Osimhen, replying with a curt "no" when asked if he was flattered by Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola saying Napoli is the best in Europe.

"It's a game that people play to put pressure on other teams, it's a game that everyone knows by now," said an irritated Spalletti.

Eintracht was without suspended France forward Randal Kolo Muani following his red card in the first leg and the Bundesliga outfit did very little to trouble Napoli.

Trouble flares

Oliver Glasner's side headed out of the competition on a night in which its fans were involved in serious disorder after traveling to Naples despite no tickets for away fans being put on sale.

Eintracht had decided to not take up its ticket allocation for the match after Italian authorities produced two separate bans in a matter of days, fearing a repeat of the trouble in Frankfurt before the first leg.

That didn't stop the German club's hardcore fans however, who clashed with local police on a tense evening in Naples.

Footage in Italian media from Tuesday also showed Napoli fans throwing objects at buses carrying Eintracht fans.

Around the stadium the atmosphere was less fraught as Napoli got through without any trouble.

Khvicha Kvaratskhelia almost scored his second wonder goal in less than a week in the 19th minute after a brilliant tackle from Zielinski sent him charging toward goal.

But he was forced wide just as he looked for a shooting chance and ended up being denied smartly by Kevin Trapp, who did well again two minutes before the break to deny the Georgian.

However, Trapp could do nothing to stop Osimhen putting Napoli ahead moments later. The Nigeria international showed why he is one of the most highly rated strikers in the world with a perfectly timed leap and header from Matteo Politano's hanging cross.

And Osimhen struck again seven minutes after the break with a simpler finish, this time tapping in Giovanni Di Lorenzo's low cross after more good play from Politano and Kvaratskhelia.

Napoli was cruising and, after two half-chances for Eintracht's Daichi Kamada and Rafael Borre and another good save from Trapp on Kvaratskhelia, the home team was three ahead on the night.

The excellent Zielinski was brought down by Djibril Sow, allowing the Poland midfielder to dust himself down and calmly slot home a spot-kick in the 64th minute.

All that was left was for the packed Stadio Diego Maradona to shout 'Ole' at every pass as the home fans watched their team make history.

Eintracht coach Glasner said that Napoli is on the same level as Bayern Munich.

"Napoli will win the Scudetto after more than 30 years, they're incredibly solid defensively, they've got the best defense in Serie A," said Glasner.

"I can't make any comparisons with the Premier League but they are top class, like Bayern Munich."

Napoli could be paired with Bayern in the draw for the last eight, which will take place on Friday in Nyon, Switzerland.

AFP

Victor Osimhen celebrates opening the scoring for Napoli during Wednesday's victory at home to Eintracht Frankfurt. AFP